LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
1800

POPULAR NOVELS

BY

MRS. MARY J. HOLMES.

TEMPEST AND SUNSHINE.	DARKNESS AND DAYLIGHT.
ENGLISH ORPHANS.	HUGH WORTHINGTON.
HOMESTEAD ON FIRESIDE.	CAMERON PRIDE.
'LENA RIVERS.	ROSE MATHER.
MEADOW BROOK.	ETHELYN'S MISTAKE.
DORA DEANE.	MILBANK.
COUSIN MAUDE.	EDNA BROWNING.
MARIAN GREY.	WEST LAWN.
EDITH LYLE.	MILDRED.
DAISY THORNTON.	FORREST HOUSE.
CHATEAU D'OR.	MADELINE.
QUEENIE HETHERTON.	CHRISTMAS STORIES.
BESSIE'S FORTUNE.	GRETCHEN.
MARGUERITE.	DR. HATHERN'S DAUGHTERS. (*New.*)

"Mrs. Holmes is a peculiarly pleasant and fascinating writer. Her books are always entertaining, and she has the rare faculty of enlisting the sympathy and affections of her readers, and of holding their attention to her pages with deep and absorbing interest."

Handsomely bound in cloth. Price, $1.50 each, and sent *free* by mail on receipt of price,

BY

G. W. DILLINGHAM, PUBLISHER

SUCCESSOR TO

G. W. CARLETON & CO., New York.

MRS. HALLAM'S COMPANION.

AND

THE SPRING FARM,

AND OTHER TALES.

BY

MRS. MARY J. HOLMES,

AUTHOR OF

"TEMPEST AND SUNSHINE," "'LENA RIVERS," "GRETCHEN,"
"MARGUERITE," "DR. HATHERN'S DAUGHTERS,"
ETC., ETC.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
COPYRIGHT.
SEP 5 1896
CITY OF WASHINGTON.

25413-B2-2

NEW YORK:

G. W. Dillingham, Publisher,

MDCCCXCVI.

PZ3
.H736
Mis
3

Copyright, 1896, by
Mrs. MARY J. HOLMES.

[*All rights reserved.*]

CONTENTS.

MRS. HALLAM'S COMPANION

Chapter		Page
I.	The Hallams	9
II.	The Homestead	24
III.	Mrs. Hallam's Applicants	36
IV.	Mrs. Fred Thurston	40
V.	The Companion	49
VI.	On the Teutonic	58
VII.	Reginald and Phineas Jones	67
VIII.	Rex at the Homestead	79
IX.	Rex Makes Discoveries	90
X.	At Aix-les-Bains	95
XI.	Grace Haynes	108
XII.	The Night of the Opera	114
XIII.	After the Opera	122
XIV.	At the Beau-Rivage	131
XV.	The Unwelcome Guest	139
XVI.	Tangled Threads	144
XVII.	On the Sea	149
XVIII.	On Sea and Land	158
XIX.	"I, Rex, Take Thee, Bertha	163

THE SPRING FARM.

Chapter		Page
I.	At the Farm House	169
II.	Where Archie Was	174
III.	Going West	180
IV.	On the Road	184
V.	Miss Raynor	194
VI.	The School Mistress	199
VII.	At the Cedars	205
VIII.	Max at the Cedars	209
IX.	"Good-Bye, Max; Good-Bye."	218
X.	At Last	225

THE HEPBURN LINE.

I.	My Aunts	235
II.	Doris	246
III.	Grantley Montague and Dorothea	254
IV.	Aleck and Thea	268
V.	Doris and the Glory Hole	278
VI.	Morton Park	280
VII.	A Soliloquy	291
VIII.	My Cousin Grantley	293
IX.	Grantley and Doris	298
X.	Thea at Morton Park	307
XI.	The Crisis	317
XII.	The Missing Link	322
XIII.	The Three Brides	332
XIV.	Two Years Later	336

MILDRED'S AMBITION.

Chapter		Page
I.	Mildred	339
II.	At Thornton Park	345
III.	Incidents of Fifteen Years	352
IV.	At the Farm House	358
V.	The Bride	365
VI.	Mrs. Giles Thornton	374
VII.	Calls at the Park	380
VIII.	Mildred and her Mother	387
IX.	Gerard and his Father	295
X.	In the Cemetery	399
XI.	What Followed	405
XII.	Love versus Money	409
XIII.	The Will	414
XIV.	Mildred and Hugh	418
XV.	The Denouement	424
XVI.	Sunshine After the Storm	431

MRS. HALLAM'S COMPANION.

CHAPTER I.

THE HALLAMS.

Mrs. Carter Hallam was going to Europe,—going to Aix-les Bains,—partly for the baths, which she hoped would lessen her fast-increasing avoirdupois, and partly to join her intimate friend, Mrs. Walker Haynes, who had urged her coming and had promised to introduce her to some of the best people, both English and American. This attracted Mrs. Hallam more than the baths. She was anxious to know the best people, and she did know a good many, although her name was not in the list of the four hundred. But she meant it should be there in the near future, nor did it seem unlikely that it might be. There was not so great a distance between the four hundred and herself, as she was now, as there had been between Mrs. Carter Hallam and little Lucy Brown, who used to live with her grandmother in an old yellow house in Sturbridge, Massachusetts, and pick berries to buy herself a pair of morocco boots. Later on, when the grandmother was dead and the yellow house sold, Lucy had worked first in a shoe-shop and then in

a dry-goods store in Worcester, where, attracted by her handsome face, Carter Hallam, a thriving grocer, had made her his wife and mistress of a pretty little house on the west side of the city. As a clerk she had often waited upon the West Side ladies, whom she admired greatly, fancying she could readily distinguish them from the ladies of the East Side. To marry a Hallam was a great honor, but to be a West-Sider was a greater, and when both came to her she nearly lost her balance, although her home was far removed from the aristocratic quarters where the old families, the real West-Siders, lived. In a way she was one of them, she thought, or at least she was no longer a clerk, and she began to cut her old acquaintances, while her husband laughed at and ridiculed her, wondering what difference it made whether one lived on the east or west side of a town. He did not care whether people took him for a nabob, or a fresh importation from the wild and woolly West; he was just Carter Hallam, a jolly, easy-going fellow whom everybody knew and everybody liked. He was born on a farm in Leicester, where the Hallams, although comparatively poor, were held in high esteem as one of the best and oldest families. At twenty-one he came into the possession of a few thousand dollars left him by an uncle for whom he was named, and then he went to the Far West, roughing it with cowboys and ranchmen, and investing his money in a gold-mine in Montana and in lands still farther west. Then he returned to Worcester, bought a small grocery, married Lucy Brown, and lived quietly for a few years, when suddenly one day there flashed across the wires the news that his mine had proved one of the richest in Montana, and his lands were worth many times what he

gave for them. He was a millionaire, with property constantly rising in value, and Worcester could no longer hold his ambitious wife.

It was too small a place for her, she said, for everybody knew everybody else's business and history, and, no matter how much she was worth, somebody was sure to taunt her with having worked in a shoe-shop, if, indeed, she did not hear that she had once picked berries to buy herself some shoes. They must go away from the old life, if they wanted to be anybody. They must travel and see the world, and get cultivated, and know what to talk about with their equals.

So they sold the house and the grocery and traveled east and west, north and south, and finally went to Europe, where they stayed two or three years, seeing nearly everything there was to be seen, and learning a great deal about ruins and statuary and pictures, in which Mrs. Hallam thought herself a connoisseur, although she occasionally got the Sistine Chapel and the Sistine Madonna badly mixed, and talked of the Paul Belvedere, a copy of which she bought at an enormous price. When they returned to America Mr. Hallam was a three times millionaire, for all his speculations had been successful and his mine was still yielding its annual harvest of gold. A handsome house on Fifth Avenue in New York was bought and furnished in the most approved style, and then Mrs. Hallam began to consider the best means of getting into society. She already knew a good many New York people whom she had met abroad, and whose acquaintance it was desirable to continue. But she soon found that acquaintances made in Paris or Rome or on the Nile were not as cordial when met at home, and she was beginning to feel dis-

couraged, when chance threw in her way Mrs. Walker Haynes, who, with the bluest of blood and the smallest of purses, knew nearly every one worth knowing, and, it was hinted, would for a *quid pro quo* open many fashionable doors to aspiring applicants who, without her aid, would probably stay outside forever.

The daughter and grand-daughter and cousin of governors and senators and judges, with a quiet assumption of superiority which was seldom offensive to those whom she wished to conciliate, she was a power in society, and more quoted and courted than any woman in her set. To be noticed by Mrs. Walker Haynes was usually a guarantee of success, and Mrs. Hallam was greatly surprised when one morning a handsome coupé stopped before her door and a moment after her maid brought her Mrs. Walker Haynes's card. She knew all about Mrs. Walker Haynes and what she was capable of doing, and in a flutter of excitement she went down to meet her. Mrs. Walker Haynes, who never took people up if there was anything doubtful in their antecedents, knew all about Mrs. Hallam, even to the shoe-shop and the clerkship. But she knew, too, that she was perfectly respectable, with no taint whatever upon her character, and that she was anxious to get into society. As it chanced, Mrs. Haynes's funds were low, for business was dull, as there were fewer human moths than usual hovering around the social candle, and when the ladies of the church which both she and Mrs. Hallam attended met to devise ways and means for raising money for some new charity, she spoke of Mrs. Hallam and offered to call upon her for a subscription, if the ladies wished it. They did wish it, and the next day found Mrs. Haynes waiting in Mrs. Hallam's drawing-

room for the appearance of its mistress, her quick-seeing eyes taking in every detail in its furnishing, and deciding on the whole that it was very good.

"Some one has taste,—the upholsterer and decorator, probably," she thought, as Mrs. Hallam came in, nervous and flurried, but at once put at ease by her visitor's gracious and friendly manner.

After a few general topics and the mention of a mutual friend whom Mrs. Hallam had met in Cairo, Mrs. Haynes came directly to the object of her visit, apologizing first for the liberty she was taking, and adding:

"But now that you are one of us in the church, I thought you might like to help us, and we need it so much."

Mrs. Hallam was not naturally generous where nothing was to be gained, but Mrs. Haynes's manner, and her "now you are one of us," made her so in this instance, and taking the paper she wrote her name for two hundred dollars, which was nearly one-fourth of the desired sum. There was a gleam of humor as well as of surprise in Mrs. Haynes's eyes as she read the amount, but she was profuse in her thanks and expressions of gratitude, and, promising to call very soon socially, she took her leave with a feeling that it would pay to take up Mrs. Hallam, who was really more lady-like and better educated than many whom she had launched upon the sea of fashion. With Mrs. Walker Haynes and several millions behind her, progress was easy for Mrs. Hallam, and within a year she was "quite in the swim," she said to her husband, who laughed at her as he had done in Worcester, and called Mrs. Haynes a fraud who knew what she was about. But he gave her

all the money she wanted, and rather enjoyed seeing her "hob-a-nob with the big bugs," as he expressed it. Nothing, however, could change him, and he remained the same unostentatious, popular man he had always been up to the day of his death, which occurred about three years before our story opens.

At that time there was living with him his nephew, the son of his only brother, Jack. Reginald,—or Rex as he was familiarly called,—was a young man of twenty-six, with exceptionally good habits, and a few days before his uncle died he said to him:

"I can trust you, Rex. You have lived with me since you were fourteen, and have never once failed me. The Hallams are all honest people, and you are half Hallam. I have made you independent by my will, and I want you to stay with your aunt and look after her affairs. She is as good a woman as ever lived, but a little off on fashion and fol-de-rol. Keep her as level as you can."

This Rex had tried to do, rather successfully, too, except when Mrs. Walker Haynes's influence was in the ascendant, when he usually succumbed to circumstances and allowed his aunt to do as she pleased. Mrs. Haynes, who had profited greatly in a pecuniary way from her acquaintance with Mrs. Hallam, was now in Europe, and had written her friend to join her at Aix-les-Bains, which she said was a charming place, full of titled people both English and French, and she had the *entrée* to the very best circles. She further added that it was desirable for a lady traveling without a male escort to have a companion besides a maid and courier. The companion was to be found in America, the courier in London, and the maid in Paris; "after which," she wrote, "you will travel *tout-à-fait en princesse*. The *en*

princesse appealed to Mrs. Hallam at once as something altogether applicable to Mrs. Carter Hallam of New York. She was a great lady now ; Sturbridge and the old yellow house and the berries and the shoe-shop were more than thirty years in the past, and so covered over with gold that it seemed impossible to uncover them ; nor had any one tried, so far as she knew. The Hallams as a family had been highly respected both in Worcester and in Leicester, and she often spoke of them, but never of the Browns, or of the old grandmother, and she was glad she had no near relatives to intrude themselves upon her and make her ashamed. She was very fond and very proud of Reginald, who was to her like a son, and who with the integrity and common sense of the Hallams had also inherited the innate refinement and kindly courtesy of his mother, a Bostonian and the daughter of a clergyman. As a rule she consulted him about everything, and after she received Mrs. Haynes's letter she showed it to him and asked his advice in the matter of a companion.

"I think she would be a nuisance and frightfully in your way at times, but if Mrs. Haynes says you must have one, it's all right, so go ahead," Rex replied, and his aunt continued :

"But how am I to find what I want ? I am so easily imposed upon, and I will not have one from the city. She would expect too much and make herself too familiar. I must have one from the country."

"Advertise, then, and they'll come round you like bees around honey," Rex said, and to this suggestion his aunt at once acceded, asking him to write the advertisement, which she dictated, with so many conditions and requirements that Rex exclaimed, "Hold on there.

You will insist next that they subscribe to the Thirty-Nine Articles, besides believing in foreordination and everything in the Westminster Catechism. You are demanding impossibilities and giving too little in return. Three hundred dollars for perfection ! I should say offer five hundred. 'The higher-priced the better' is Mrs. Walker Haynes's motto, and I am sure she will think it far more tony to have an expensive appendage than a cheap one. The girl will earn her money, too, or I'm mistaken ; for Mrs. Haynes is sure to share her services with you, as she does everything else."

He spoke laughingly, but sarcastically, for he perfectly understood Mrs. Walker Haynes, whom his outspoken uncle had called "a sponge and a schemer, who knew how to feather her nest." Privately Rex thought the same, but he did not often express these views to his aunt, who at last consented to the five hundred dollars, and Rex wrote the advertisement, which was as follows :

"WANTED,

"A companion for a lady who is going abroad. One from the country, between twenty and twenty-five, preferred. She must be a good accountant, a good reader, and a good seamstress. She must also have a sufficient knowledge of French to understand the language and make herself understood. To such a young lady five hundred dollars a year will be given, and all expenses paid. Address,

"MRS. CARTER HALLAM,
"No. — Fifth Avenue, New York.'

When Rex read this to his aunt, she said :

"Yes, that will do ; but don't you think it just as well to say *young person* instead of *young lady ?*"

"No, I don't," Rex answered, promptly. "You want a lady, and not a *person*, as you understand the word, and I wouldn't begin by insulting her."

So the "lady" was allowed to stand, and then, without his aunt's knowledge, Rex added:

"Those applying will please send their photographs."

"I should like to see the look of astonishment on aunt's face when the pictures come pouring in. There will be scores of them, the offer is so good," Rex thought, as he folded the advertisement and left the house.

That night, when dinner was over, he said to his aunt: "I have a project in mind which I wish to tell you about."

Mrs. Hallam gave a little shrug of annoyance. Her husband had been full of projects, most of which she had disapproved, as she probably should this of Rex, who continued:

"I am thinking of buying a place in the country,—the real country, I mean,—where the houses are old-fashioned and far apart, and there are woods and ponds and brooks and things."

"And pray what would you do with such a place?" Mrs. Hallam asked.

Rex replied, "I'd make it into a fancy farm and fill it with blooded stock, hunting-horses, and dogs. I'd keep the old house intact so far as architecture is concerned, and fit it up as a kind of bachelor's hall, where I can have a lot of fellows in the summer and fall, and hunt and fish and have a glorious time. Ladies will not be excluded, of course, and when you are fagged out with Saratoga and Newport I shall invite you, and possibly Mrs. Haynes and Grace, down to see the fox-hunts I

mean to have, just as they do in the Genesee Valley. Won't it be fun?"

Rex was eloquent on the subject of his fancy farm. He was very fond of the country, although he really knew but little about it, as he was born in New York, and had lived there all his life with the exception of two years spent at the South with his mother's brother and four years at Yale. His aunt, on the contrary, detested the country, with its woods, and ponds, and brooks, and old-fashioned houses, and she felt very little interest in Rex's fancy farm and fox-hunts, which she looked upon as wholly visionary. She asked him, however, where the farm was, and he replied:

"You see, Marks, who is in the office with me, has a client who owns a mortgage on some old homestead among the hills in Massachusetts. This mortgage, which has changed hands two or three times and been renewed once or twice, comes due in October, and Marks says there is not much probability that the old man,—I believe he is quite old,—can pay it, and the place will be sold at auction. I can, of course, wait and bid it off cheap, as farms are not in great demand in that vicinity; but I don't like to do that. I'd rather buy it outright, giving the old fellow more than it is worth rather than less. Marks says it is a rambling old house, with three or four gables, and stands on a hill-side with a fine view of the surrounding country. The woods are full of pleasant drives, and ponds where the white lilies grow and where I can fish and have some small boats."

"But where is it? In what town, I mean?" Mrs. Hallam asked, with a slight tremor in her voice, which, however, Rex did not notice as he answered:

"I don't remember where Marks's client said it was, but I have his letter. Let me see." And, taking the letter from his pocket, he glanced at it a moment, and then said, "It is in Leicester, and not more than five or six miles from the city of Worcester and Lake Quinsigamond, where I mean to have a yacht and call it the Lucy Hallam for you. Why, auntie, it has just occurred to me that you once lived in Worcester, and Uncle Hallam, too, and that he and father were born in Leicester. Were you ever there,—at the house where father was born, I mean? But of course you have been."

Rex had risen to his feet and stood leaning on the mantel and looking at his aunt with an eager, expectant expression on his face. She was pale to her lips as she replied:

"Yes, I was there just after I was married. Your uncle drove me out one afternoon to see the place. Strangers were living there then, for his father and mother were dead. He was as country mad as you are, and actually went down upon his knees before the old well-sweep and bucket."

"I don't blame him. I believe I'd do the same," Rex replied, and then went on questioning her rapidly. "What was the house like? Had it a big chimney in the centre?"

Mrs. Hallam said it had.

"Wide fireplaces?"

"Rather wide,—yes."

"Kitchen fireplace, with a crane?"

"I don't know, but most likely."

"Little window-panes, and deep window-seats?"

"I think so."

"Big iron door-latches instead of knobs?"

"Yes, and a brass knocker."

"Slanting roof, or high?"

"It was a high gabled roof,—three or four gables, and must have been rather pretentious when it was new.

"Rex,"—and Mrs. Hallam's voice trembled perceptibly,—"the gables and the situation overlooking the valley make me think that the place you have in view is possibly your father's old home."

"By Jove," Rex exclaimed, "wouldn't that be jolly! I believe I'd give a thousand dollars extra for the sake of having the old homestead for my own. I wonder who the old chap is who lives there. I mean to go down and see for myself as soon as I return from Chicago and we get the lawsuit off our hands which is taking all Marks's time and mine."

Mrs. Hallam did not say what she thought, for she knew there was not much use in opposing Rex, but in her heart she did not approve of bringing the long-buried past up to the present, which was so different. The Homestead was well enough, and Leicester was well enough, for Hallam had been an honored name in the neighborhood, and Rex would be honored, too, as a scion of the family; but it was too near Worcester and the shoe-shop and the store and the people who had known her as a working-girl, and who would be sure to renew the acquaintance if she were to go there. She had no relatives to trouble her, unless it were a certain Phineas Jones, who was so far removed that she could scarcely call him a relative. But if he were living he would certainly find her if she ventured near him, and cousin her, as he used to do in Worcester, where he was continually calling upon her after her marriage and reminding her of spelling-schools and singing-schools and

circuses which he said he had attended with her. How distasteful it all was, and how she shrank from everything pertaining to her early life, which seemed so far away that she sometimes half persuaded herself it had never been!

And yet her talk with Rex about the old Homestead on the hill had stirred her strangely, and that night, long after her usual hour for retiring, she sat by her window looking out upon the great city, whose many lights, shining like stars through the fog and rain, she scarcely saw at all. Her thoughts had gone back thirty years to an October day just after her return from her wedding-trip to Niagara, when her husband had driven her into the country to visit his old home. How happy he had been, and how vividly she could recall the expression on his face when he caught sight of the red gables and the well-sweep where she told Reginald he had gone down upon his knees. There had been a similar expression on Rex's face that evening when he talked of his fancy farm, and Rex was in appearance much like what her handsome young husband had been that lovely autumn day, when a purple haze was resting on the hills and the air was soft and warm as summer. He had taken her first to the woods and shown her where he and his brother Jack had set their traps for the woodchucks and snared the partridges in the fall and hunted for the trailing arbutus and the sassafras in the spring; then to the old cider-mill at the end of the lane, and to the hill where they had their slide in winter, and to the barn, where they had a swing, and to the brook in the orchard, where they had a water-wheel; then to the well, where he drew up the bucket, and, poising it upon the curb, stooped to drink

from it, asking her to do the same and see if she ever quaffed a sweeter draught; but she was afraid of wetting her dress, and had drawn back, saying she was not thirsty. Strangers occupied the house, but permission was given them to go over it, and he had taken her through all the rooms, showing her where he and Jack and Annie were born, and where the latter had died when a little child of eight; then to the garret, where they used to spread the hickory-nuts and butternuts to dry, and down to the cellar, where the apples and cider were stored. He was like a school-boy in his eagerness to explain everything, while she was bored to death and heard with dismay his proposition to drive two or three miles farther to the Greenville cemetery, where the Hallams for many generations back had been buried. There was a host of them, and some of the head-stones were sunken and mouldy with age and half fallen down, while the lettering upon them was almost illegible.

"I wonder whose this is?" he said, as he went down upon the ground to decipher the date of the oldest one. "I can't make it out, except that it is seventeen hundred and something. He must have been an old settler," he continued, as he arose and brushed a patch of dirt from his trousers with his silk handkerchief. Then, glancing at her as she stood listlessly leaning against a stone, he said, "Why, Lucy, you look tired. Are you?"

"No, not very," she answered, a little pettishly; "but I don't think it very exhilarating business for a bride to be visiting the graves of her husband's ancestors."

He did not hunt for any more dates after that, but, gathering a few wild flowers growing in the tall grass,

he laid them upon his mother's grave and Annie's, and, going out to the carriage standing by the gate, drove back to Worcester through a long stretch of woods, where the road was lined on either side with sumachs and berry-bushes and clumps of bitter-sweet, and there was no sign of life except when a blackbird flew from one tree to another, or a squirrel showed its bushy tail upon the wall. He thought it delightful, and said that it was the pleasantest drive in the neighborhood and one which he had often taken with Jack when they were boys; but she thought it horribly lonesome and poky, and was glad when they struck the pavement of the town.

"Carter always liked the country," she said to herself when her reverie came to an end, and she left her seat by the window; "and Rex is just like him, and will buy that place if he can, and I shall have to go there as hostess and be called upon by a lot of old women in sun-bonnets and blanket shawls, who will call me Lucy Ann and say, 'You remember me, don't you? I was Mary Jane Smith; I worked in the shoe-shop with you years ago.' And Phineas Jones will turn up, with his cousining and dreadful reminiscences. Ah me, what a pity one could not be born without antecedents!"

CHAPTER II.

THE HOMESTEAD.

It stood at the end of a grassy avenue or lane a little distance from the electric road between Worcester and Spencer, its outside chimneys covered with woodbine and its sharp gables distinctly visible as the cars wound up the steep Leicester hill. Just what its age was no one knew exactly. Relic-hunters who revel in antiquities put it at one hundred and fifty. But the oldest inhabitant in the town, who was an authority for everything ancient, said that when he was a small boy it was comparatively new, and considered very fine on account of its gables and brass knocker, and, as he was ninety-five or six, the house was probably over a hundred. It was built by a retired sea-captain from Boston, and after his death it changed hands several times until it was bought by the Hallams, who lived there so long and were so highly esteemed that it came to bear their name, and was known as the Hallam Homestead. After the death of Carter Hallam's father it was occupied by different parties, and finally became the property of a Mr. Leighton, who rather late in life had married a girl from Georgia, where he had been for a time a teacher. Naturally scholarly and fond of books, he would have preferred teaching, but his young wife, accustomed to plantation life, said she should be happier in the country, and so he bought the Homestead and commenced farming, with very little knowledge of what ought to be done and very little means with which to

do it. Under such circumstances he naturally grew poorer every year, while his wife's artistic tastes did not help the matter. Remembering her father's plantation with its handsome grounds and gardens, she instituted numerous changes in and about the house, which made it more attractive, but did not add to its value. The big chimney was taken down and others built upon the outside, after the Southern style. A wide hall was put through the centre where the chimney had been ; a broad double piazza was built in front, while the ground was terraced down to the orchard below, where a rustic bridge was thrown across the little brook where Carter and Jack Hallam had built their water-wheel. Other changes the ambitious little Georgian was contemplating, when she died suddenly and was carried back to sleep under her native pines, leaving her husband utterly crushed at his loss, with the care of two little girls, Dorcas and Bertha, and a mortgage of two thousand dollars upon his farm. For some years he scrambled on as best he could with hired help, giving all his leisure time to educating and training his daughters, who were as unlike each other as two sisters well could be. Dorcas, the elder, was fair and blue-eyed, and round and short and matter-of-fact, caring more for the farm and the house than for books, while Bertha was just the opposite, and, with her soft brown hair, bright eyes, brilliant complexion, and graceful, slender figure, was the exact counterpart of her beautiful Southern mother when she first came to the Homestead ; but otherwise she was like her father, caring more for books than for the details of every-day life.

" Dorcas is to be housekeeper, and I the wage-earner, to help pay off the mortgage which troubles father so

much," she said, and when she was through school she became book-keeper for the firm of Swartz & Co., of Boston, with a salary of four hundred dollars a year. Dorcas, who was two years older, remained at home as housekeeper. And a very thrifty one she made, seeing to everything and doing everything, from making butter to making beds, for she kept no help. The money thus saved was put carefully by towards paying the mortgage coming due in October. By the closest economy it had been reduced from two thousand to one thousand, and both Dorcas and Bertha were straining every nerve to increase the fund which was to liquidate the debt.

It was not very often that Bertha indulged in the luxury of coming home, for even that expense was something, and every dollar helped. But on the Saturday following the appearance of Mrs. Hallam's advertisement in the New York *Herald* she was coming to spend Sunday for the first time in several weeks. These visits were great events at the Homestead, and Dorcas was up as soon as the first robin chirped in his nest in the big apple-tree which shaded the rear of the house and was now odorous and beautiful with its clusters of pink-and-white blossoms. There was churning to do that morning, and butter to get off to market, besides the usual Saturday's cleaning and baking, which included all Bertha's favorite dishes. There was Bertha's room to be gone over with broom and duster, and all the vases and handleless pitchers to be filled with daffies and tulips and great bunches of apple-blossoms and a clump or two of the trailing arbutus which had lingered late in the woods. But Dorcas's work was one of love; if she were tired she scarcely

thought of it at all, and kept steadily on until everything was done. In her afternoon gown and white apron she sat down to rest awhile on the piazza overlooking the valley, thinking as she did so what a lovely place it was, with its large, sunny rooms, wide hall, and fine view, and how dreadful it would be to lose it.

"Five hundred dollars more we must have, and where it is to come from I do not know. Bertha always says something will turn up, but I am not so hopeful," she said, sadly. Then, glancing at the clock, she saw that it was nearly time for the car which would bring her sister from the Worcester station. "I'll go out to the cross-road and meet her," she thought, just as she heard the sharp clang of the bell and saw the trolley-pole as it came up the hill. A moment more, and Bertha alighted and came rapidly towards her.

"You dear old Dor, I'm so glad to see you and be home again," Bertha said, giving up her satchel and umbrella and putting her arm caressingly around Dorcas's neck as she walked, for she was much the taller of the two.

It was a lovely May afternoon, and the place was at its best in the warm sunlight, with the fresh green grass and the early flowers and the apple orchard full of blossoms which filled the air with perfume.

"Oh, this is delightful, and it is so good to get away from that close office and breathe this pure air," Bertha said, as she went from room to room, and then out upon the piazza, where she stood taking in deep inhalations and seeming to Dorcas to grow brighter and fresher with each one. "Where is father?" she asked at last.

"Here, daughter," was answered, as Mr. Leighton,

who had been to the village, came through a rear door.

He was a tall, spare man, with snowy hair and a stoop in his shoulders, which told of many years of hard work. But the refinement in his manner and the gentleness in his face were indicative of good breeding, and a life somewhat different from that which he now led.

Bertha was at his side in a moment, and had him down in a rocking-chair, and was sitting on an arm of it, brushing the thin hair back from his forehead, while she looked anxiously into his face, which wore a more troubled expression than usual, although he evidently tried to hide it.

"What is it, father? Are you very tired?" she asked, at last, and he replied:

"No, daughter, not very; and if I were the sight of you would rest me."

Catching sight of the corner of an envelope in his vest pocket, with a woman's quick intuition, she guessed that it had something to do with his sadness.

"You have a letter. Is there anything in it about that hateful mortgage?" she said.

"It is all about the mortgage. There's a way to get rid of it," he answered, while his voice trembled, and something in his eyes, as he looked into Bertha's, made her shiver a little; but she kissed him lovingly, and said very low:

"Yes, father. I know there is a way," her lips quivering as she said it, and a lump rising in her throat as if she were smothering.

"Will you read the letter?" he asked, and she answered:

"Not now; let us have supper first. I am nearly famished, and long to get at Dor's rolls and broiled chicken, which I smelled before I left the car at the cross-roads."

She was very gay all through the supper, although a close observer might have seen a cloud cross her bright face occasionally, and a look of pain and preoccupation in her eyes; but she laughed and chatted merrily, asking about the neighbors and the farm, and when supper was over helped Dorcas with her dishes and the evening work, sang snatches of the last opera, and told her sister about the new bell skirt just coming into fashion, and how she could cut over her old ones like it. When everything was done she seemed to nerve herself to some great effort, and, going to her father said:

"Now for the letter. From whom is it?"

"Gorham, the man who holds the mortgage," Mr. Leighton replied.

"Oh-h, Gorham!" and Bertha's voice was full of intense relief. "I thought perhaps it was —— but no matter, that will come later. Let us hear what Mr. Gorham has to say. He cannot foreclose till October, anyhow."

"And not then, if we do what he proposes. This is it," Mr. Leighton said, as he began to read the letter, which was as follows:

"Brooklyn, N. Y., May —, 18—.

"Mr. Leighton:

"Dear Sir,—A gentleman in New York wishes to purchase a farm in the country, where he can spend a part of the summer and autumn, fishing and fox hunting and so on. From what he has heard of your place

and the woods around it, he thinks it will suit him exactly, and in the course of a few weeks proposes to go out and see it. As he has ample means, he will undoubtedly pay you a good price, cash down, and that will relieve you of all trouble with the mortgage. I still think I must have my money in October, as I have promised it elsewhere.

"Very truly,

"JOHN GORHAM."

"Well?" Mr. Leighton said, as he finished reading the letter, and looked inquiringly at his daughters.

Bertha, who was very pale, was the first to speak. "Do you want to leave the old home?" she asked, and her father replied, in a choking voice, "No, oh, no. I have lived here twenty-seven years, and know every rock and tree and shrub, and love them all. I brought your mother here a bride and a slip of a girl like you, who are so much like her that sometimes when I see you flitting around and hear your voice I think for a moment she has come back to me again. You were both born here. Your mother died here, and here I want to die. But what is the use of prolonging the struggle? I have raked and scraped and saved in every possible way to pay the debt contracted so long ago, the interest of which has eaten up all my profits, and I have got within five hundred dollars of it, but do not see how I can get any further. I may sell a few apples and some hay, but I'll never borrow another dollar, and if this New York chap offers a good price we'd better sell. Dorcas and I can rent a few rooms somewhere in Boston, maybe, and we shall all be together till I die, which, please God, will not be very long."

His face was white, with a tired, discouraged look upon it pitiful to see, while Dorcas, who cried easily, was sobbing aloud. But Bertha's eyes were round and bright and dry, and there was a ring in her voice as she said, "You will *not* die, and you will not sell the place. Horses and dogs and fox-hunts, indeed! I'd like to see that New-Yorker plunging through the fields and farms with his horses and hounds, for that is what fox-hunting means. He would be mobbed in no time. Who is he, I wonder? I should like to meet him and give him a piece of my mind."

She was getting excited, and her cheeks were scarlet as she kissed her father again and said, "Write and tell that New-Yorker to stay where he is, and take his foxes to some other farm. He cannot have ours, nor any one else. Micawber-like, I believe something will turn up; I am sure of it; only give me time."

Then, rising from her chair, she went swiftly out into the twilight, and, crossing the road, ran down the terrace to a bit of broken wall, where she sat down and watched the night gathering on the distant hills and over the woods, and fought the battle which more than one unselfish woman has fought,—a battle between inclination and what seemed to be duty. If she chose, she could save the farm with a word and make her father's last days free from care. There was a handsome house in Boston of which she might be mistress any day, with plenty of money at her command to do with as she pleased. But the owner was old compared to herself, forty at least, and growing bald; he called her Berthy, and was not at all like the ideal she had in her mind of the man whom she could love,—who was really more like one who might hunt foxes and ride his

horses through the fields, while she rode by his side, than like the commonplace Mr. Sinclair, who had asked her twice to be his wife. At her last refusal only a few days ago he had said he should not give her up yet, but should write her father for his co-operation, and it was from him she feared the New York letter had come when she saw it in her father's pocket. She knew he was honorable and upright and would be kind and generous to her and her family, but she had dreamed of a different love, and she could not listen to his suit unless it were to save the old home for her father and Dorcas.

For a time she sat weighing in the balance her love for them and her love for herself, while darkness deepened around her and the air grew heavy with the scent of the apple-blossoms and the grove of pine-trees not far away ; yet she was no nearer a decision than when she first sat down. It was strange that in the midst of her intense thinking, the baying of hounds, the tramp of horses' feet, and the shout of many voices should ring in her ears so distinctly that once, as some bushes stirred near her, she turned, half expecting to see the hunted fox fleeing for his life, and, with an impulse to save him from his pursuers, put out both her hands.

"This is a queer sort of hallucination, and it comes from that New York letter," she thought, just as from under a cloud where it had been hidden the new moon sailed out to the right of her. Bertha was not superstitious, but, like many others, she clung to some of the traditions of her childhood, and the new moon seen over the right shoulder was one of them. She always framed a wish when she saw it, and she did so now, involuntarily repeating the words she had so often used when a child ;

"New moon, new moon, listen to me,
And grant the boon I ask of thee,"

and then, almost as seriously as if it were a prayer, she wished that something might occur to keep the home for her father and herself from Mr. Sinclair.

"I don't believe much in the new moon, it has cheated me so often; but I do believe in presentiments, and I have one that something will turn up. I'll wait awhile and see," she said, as the silvery crescent was lost again under a cloud. Beginning to feel a little chilly, she went back to the house, where she found her father reading his evening paper.

This reminded her of a New York *Herald* she had bought on the car of a little newsboy, whose ragged coat and pleasant face had decided her to refuse the chocolates offered her by a larger boy and take the paper instead. It was lying on the table, where she had put it when she first came in. Taking it up, she sat down and opened it. Glancing from page to page, she finally reached the advertisements, and her eye fell upon that of Mrs. Hallam.

"Oh, father, Dorcas, I told you something would turn up, and there has! Listen!" and she read the advertisement aloud. "The very thing I most desired has come. I have always wanted to go to Europe, but never thought I could, on account of the expense, and here it is, all paid, and five hundred dollars besides. That will save the place. I did not wish the new moon for nothing. Something has turned up."

"But, Bertha," said the more practical Dorcas, "what reason have you to think you will get the situation?

There are probably more than five hundred applicants for it,—one for each dollar."

"I know I shall. I feel it as I have felt other things which have come to me. Theosophic presentiments I call them."

Dorcas went on: "And if it does come, I don't see how it will help the mortgage due in October. You will not get your pay in advance, and possibly not until the end of the year."

"I shall borrow the money and give my note," Bertha answered, promptly. "Anybody will trust me. Swartz & Co. will, anyway, knowing that I shall come back and work it out if Mrs. Hallam fails me. By the way, that is the name of the people who lived here years ago. Perhaps Mrs. Carter belongs to the family. Do you know where they are, father?"

Mr. Leighton said he did not. He thought, however, they were all dead, while Dorcas asked, "If you are willing to borrow money of Swartz & Co., why don't you try Cousin Louie, and pay her in installments?"

"Cousin Louie!" Bertha repeated. "That would be borrowing of her proud husband, Fred Thurston, who, since I have been a bread-winner, never sees me in the street if he can help it. I'd take in washing before I'd ask a favor of him. My heart is set upon Europe, if Mrs. Hallam will have me, and you do not oppose me too strongly."

"But I must oppose you," her father said; and then followed a long and earnest discussion between Mr. Leighton, Dorcas, and Bertha, the result of which was that Bertha was to wait a few days and consider the matter before writing to Mrs. Hallam.

That night, however, after her father had retired, she

dashed off a rough draught of what she meant to say and submitted it to Dorcas for approval. It was as follows:

"MRS. HALLAM:

"MADAM,—I have seen your advertisement for a companion, and shall be glad of the situation. My name is Bertha Leighton. I am twenty-two years old, and was graduated at the Charlestown Seminary three years ago. I am called a good reader, and ought to be a good accountant, as for two years I have been bookkeeper in the firm of Swartz & Co., Boston. I am not very handy with my needle, for want of practice, but can soon learn. While in school I took lessons in French of a native teacher, who complimented my pronunciation and quickness to comprehend. Consequently I think I shall find no difficulty in understanding the language after a little and making myself understood. I enclose my photograph, which flatters me somewhat. My address is

"BERTHA LEIGHTON,
"No. — Derring St., Boston, Mass."

"I think it covers the whole business," Bertha said to Dorcas, who objected to one point. "The photograph does not flatter you," she said, while Bertha insisted that it did, as it represented a much more stylish-looking young woman than Mrs. Carter Hallam's companion ought to be. "I wonder what sort of woman she is? I somehow fancy she is a snob," she said; "but, snob me all she pleases, she cannot keep me from seeing Europe, and I don't believe she will try to cheat me out of my wages."

CHAPTER III.

MRS. HALLAM'S APPLICANTS.

SEVERAL days after Mrs. Hallam's advertisement appeared in the papers, Reginald, who had been away on business, returned, and found his aunt in her room struggling frantically with piles of letters and photographs and with a very worried and excited look on her face.

"Oh, Rex," she cried, as he came in, "I am so glad you have come, for I am nearly wild. Only think! seventy applicants, and as many photographs! What possessed them to send their pictures?"

Rex kept his own counsel, but gave a low whistle as he glanced at the pile which filled the table.

"Got enough for an album, haven't you? How do they look as a whole?" he asked.

"I don't know, and I don't care. Such a time as I have had reading their letters, and such recommendations as most of them give of themselves, telling me what reverses of fortune they have suffered, what church they belong to, and how long they have taught in Sunday-school, and all that, as if I cared. But I have decided which to choose; her letter came this morning, with one other,—the last of the lot, I trust. I like her because she writes so plainly and sensibly and seems so truthful. She says she is not a good seamstress and that her picture flatters her, while most of the others say their pictures are not good. Then she is so respectful and simply addresses me as 'Madam,' while

all the others *dear* me. If there is anything I like, it is respect in a servant."

"Thunder, auntie! you don't call your companion a servant, do you?" Rex exclaimed, but his aunt only replied by passing him Bertha's letter. "She writes well. How does she look?" he asked.

"Here she is." And his aunt gave him the photograph of a short, sleepy-looking girl, with little or no expression in her face or eyes, and an unmistakable second-class air generally.

"Oh, horrors!" Rex exclaimed. "This girl never wrote that letter. Why, she simpers and squints and is positively ugly. There must be some mistake, and you have mixed things dreadfully."

"No, I haven't," Mrs. Hallam persisted. "I was very careful to keep the photographs and letters together as they came. This is Bertha Leighton's, sure, and she says it flatters her."

"What must the original be!" Rex groaned.

His aunt continued, "I'd rather she'd be plain than good-looking. I don't want her attracting attention and looking in the glass half the time. Mrs. Haynes always said, 'Get plain girls by all means, in preference to pretty ones with airs and hangers-on.'"

"All right, if Mrs. Haynes says so," Rex answered, with a shrug of his shoulders, as he put down the photograph of the girl he called Squint-Eye, and began carelessly to look at the others.

"Oh-h!" he said, catching up Bertha's picture. "This is something like it. By Jove, she's a stunner. Why don't you take her? What splendid eyes she has, and how she carries herself!"

"Read her letter," his aunt said, handing him a note

in which, among other things, the writer, who gave her name as Rose Arabella Jefferson, and claimed relationship with Thomas Jefferson, Joe Jefferson and Jefferson Davis, said she was a member in good standing of the First Baptist Church, and spelled Baptist with two *b*'s. There were also other mistakes in orthography, besides some in grammar, and Rex dropped it in disgust, but held fast to the photograph, whose piquant face, bright, laughing eyes, and graceful poise of head and shoulders attracted him greatly.

"Rose Arabella Jefferson," he began, "blood relation of Joe Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson, and Jefferson Davis, and member in good standing in the First Baptist Church, spelled with a *b* in the middle, you never wrote that letter, I know; and if you did, your blue blood ought to atone for a few lapses in grammar and spelling. I am sure Mrs. Walker Haynes would think so. Take her, auntie, and run the risk. She is from the country, where you said your companion must hail from, while Squint-Eye is from Boston, with no ancestry, no religion, and probably the embodiment of clubs and societies and leagues and women's rights and Christian Science and the Lord knows what. Take Rose Arabella."

But Mrs. Hallam was firm. Rose Arabella was quite too good-looking, and Boston was country compared with New York. "Squint-Eye" was her choice, provided her employers spoke well of her; and she asked Rex to write to Boston and make inquiries of Swartz & Co., concerning Miss Leighton.

"Not if I know myself," Rex answered. "I will do everything reasonable, but I draw the line on turning detective and prying into any girl's character.

He was firm on this point, and Mrs. Hallam wrote herself to Swartz & Co., and then proceeded to tear up and burn the numerous letters and photographs filling her table. Rose Arabella Jefferson, however, was not among them, for she, with other pretty girls, some personal friends and some strangers, was adorning Rex's looking-glass, where it was greatly admired by the housemaid as Mr. Reginald's latest fancy.

A few days later Mrs. Hallam said to Rex, "I have heard from Swartz & Co., and they speak in the highest terms of Miss Leighton. I wish you would write for me and tell her I have decided to take her, and that she is to come to me on Friday, June —, as the Teutonic sails the next morning."

Reginald did as he was requested, thinking the while how much he would rather be writing to Rose Arabella, *Babtist* and all, than to Bertha Leighton. But there was no help for it; Bertha was his aunt's choice, and was to be her companion instead of his, he reflected, as he directed the letter, which he posted on his way down town. The next day he started for the West on business for the law firm, promising his aunt that if possible he would return in time to see her off; "and then," he added, "I am going to Leicester to look after my fancy farm."

CHAPTER IV.

MRS. FRED THURSTON.

BERTHA waited anxiously for an answer to her letter; when it did not come she grew very nervous and restless, and began to lose faith in the new moon and her theosophical presentiments, as she called her convictions of what was coming to pass. A feeling of dread began also to haunt her lest, after all, the man with the bald head, who called her Berthy, might be the only alternative to save the homestead from the auctioneer's hammer. But the letter came at last and changed her whole future. There was an interview with her employers, who, having received Mrs. Hallam's letter of inquiry, were not surprised. Although sorry to part with her, they readily agreed to advance whatever money should be needed in October, without other security than her note, which she was to leave with her father.

There was another interview with Mr. Sinclair, who at its close had a very sorry look on his face and a suspicion of suppressed tears in his voice as he said, "It is hard to give you up, and I could have made you so happy, and your father, too. Good-bye, and God bless you. Mrs. Thurston will be disappointed. Her heart was quite set upon having you for a neighbor, as you would be if you were my wife. Good-bye."

The Mrs. Thurston alluded to was Bertha's cousin Louie, from the South, who, four years before had spent part of a summer at the Homestead. She had then

gone to Newport, where she captured Fred Thurston, a Boston millionaire, who made love to her hotly for one month, married her the next, swore at her the next, and in a quiet but decided manner had tyrannized over and bullied her ever since. But he gave her all the money she wanted, and, as that was the principal thing for which she married him, she bore her lot bravely, became in time a butterfly of fashion, and laughed and danced and dressed, and went to lunches and teas and receptions and dinners and balls, taking stimulants to keep her up before she went, and bromide, or chloral, or sulfonal, to make her sleep when she came home. But all this told upon her at last, and after four years of it she began to droop, with a consciousness that something was sapping her strength and stealing all her vitality. "Nervous prostration," the physician called it, recommending a change of air and scene, and, as a trip to Europe had long been contemplated by Mr. Thurston, he had finally decided upon a summer in Switzerland, and was to sail some time in July. Mrs. Thurston was very fond of her relatives at the Homestead, and especially of Bertha, who when she was first married was a pupil in Charlestown Seminary and spent nearly every Sunday with her. After a while, however, and for no reason whatever except that on one or two occasions he had shown his frightful temper before her, Mr. Thurston conceived a dislike for Bertha and forbade Louie's inviting her so often to his house, saying he did not marry her poor relations. This put an end to any close intimacy between the cousins, and although Bertha called occasionally she seldom met Louie's husband, who, after she entered the employment of Swartz & Co., rarely recognized her in the street. Bread-winners were far

beneath his notice, and Bertha was a sore point between him and his wife, who loved her cousin with the devotion of a sister and often wrote, begging her to come, if only for an hour.

But Bertha was too proud to trespass where the master did not want her, and it was many weeks since they had met. She must go now and say good-bye. And after Mr. Sinclair left her she walked along Commonwealth Avenue to her cousin's elegant house, which stood side by side with one equally handsome, of which she had just refused to be mistress. But she scarcely glanced at it, or, if she did, it was with no feeling of regret as she ran up the steps and rang the bell.

Mrs. Thurston was at home and alone, the servant said, and Bertha, who went up unannounced, found her in her pleasant morning room, lying on a couch in the midst of a pile of cushions, with a very tired look upon her lovely face.

"Oh, Bertha," she exclaimed, springing up with outstretched hands, as her cousin came in, "I am so glad to see you! Where have you kept yourself so long? And when are you coming to be my neighbor? I saw Mr. Sinclair last week, and he still had hopes."

Bertha replied by telling what the reader already knows, and adding that she had come to say good-bye, as she was to sail in two weeks.

"Oh, how could you refuse him, and he so kind and good, and so fond of you?" Louie said.

Bertha, between whom and her cousin there were no domestic secrets, replied:

"Because I do not love him, and never can, good and kind as I know him to be. With your experience, would you advise me to marry for money?"

Instantly a shadow came over Louie's face, and she hesitated a little before she answered :

"Yes, and no ; all depends upon the man, and whether you loved some one else. If you knew he would swear at you, and call you names, and storm before the servants, and throw things,—not at you, perhaps, but at the side of the house,—I should say no, decidedly ; but if he were kind, and good, and generous, like Charlie Sinclair, I should say yes. I did so want you for my neighbor. Can't you reconsider? Who is Mrs. Hallam, I wonder? I know some Hallams, or a Hallam,—Reginald. He lives in New York, and it seems to me his aunt's name is Mrs. Carter Hallam. Let me tell you about him. I feel like talking of the old life in Florida, which seems so long ago."

She was reclining again among the cushions, with one arm under her head, a far-away look in her eyes, and a tone in her voice as if she were talking to herself rather than to Bertha.

"You know my father lived in Florida," she began, "not far from Tallahassee, and your mother lived over the line in Georgia. Our place was called Magnolia Grove, and there were oleanders and yellow jasmine and Cherokee roses everywhere. This morning when I was so tired and felt that life was not worth the living, I fancied I was in my old home again, and I smelled the orange-blossoms and saw the magnolias which bordered the avenue to our house, fifty or more, in full bloom, and Rex and I were playing under them. His uncle's plantation joined ours, and when his mother died in Boston he came to live with her brother at Grassy Spring. He was twelve and I was nine, and I had never played with any boy before except the negroes, and we

were so fond of each other. He called me his little sweetheart, and said he was going to marry me when he was older. When he was fourteen, his uncle on his father's side, a Mr. Hallam, from New York, sent for him, and he went away, promising to come back again when he was a man. We wrote to each other a few times, just boy and girl letters, you know. He called me Dear Louie and I called him Dear Rex, and then, I hardly know why, that chapter of my life closed, never to be reopened. Grandfather, who owned Magnolia Grove, lost nearly everything during the war, so that father, who took the place after him, was comparatively poor, and when he died we were poorer still, mother and I, and had to sell the plantation and move to Tallahassee, where we kept boarders,—people from the North, mostly, who came there for the winter. I was sixteen then, and I tried to help mother all I could. I dusted the rooms, and washed the glass and china, and did a lot of things I never thought I'd have to do. When I was eighteen Rex Hallam came to Jacksonville and ran over to see us. If he had been handsome as a boy of fourteen, he was still handsomer as a man of twenty-one, with what in a woman would be called a sweet graciousness of manner which won all hearts to him ; but as he is a man I will drop the sweet and say that he was kind alike to everybody, old and young, rich and poor, and had the peculiar gift of making every woman think she was especially pleasing to him, whether she were married or single, pretty or otherwise. He stopped with us a week, and because I was so proud and rebellious against our changed circumstances, and so ashamed to have him find me dusting and washing dishes, I was cold and stiff towards him,

and our old relations were not altogether resumed, although he was very kind. Sometimes for fun he helped me dust, and once he wiped the dishes for me and broke a china teapot, and then he went away and I never saw him again till last summer, when I met him at Saratoga. Fred, who was with him in college, introduced us to each other, supposing we were strangers. You ought to have seen the look of surprise on Rex's face when Fred said, 'This is my wife.'

"'Why, Louie,' he exclaimed, 'I don't need an introduction to you;' then to my husband, 'We are old friends, Louie and I;' and we told him of our early acquaintance.

"For a wonder, Fred did not seem a bit jealous of him, although savage if another man looked at me. Nor had he any cause, for Rex's manner was just like a brother's, but oh, such a brother! and I was so happy the two weeks he was there. We drove and rode and danced and talked together, and never but once did he refer to the past. Then, in his deep, musical voice, the most musical I ever head in a man, he said, 'I thought you were going to wait for me,' and I answered, 'I did wait, and you never came.'

"That was all; but the night before he went away he was in our room and asked for my photograph, which was lying upon the table. He had quite a collection, he said, and would like to add mine to it, and I gave it to him. Fred knew it and was willing, but since then, when he is in one of his moods, he taunts me with it, and says he knew I was in love with Rex all the time,—that he saw it in my face, and that Rex saw it, too, and despised me for it while pretending to admire me, and because he knew Rex despised me and he could

trust him, he allowed me full liberty just to see how far I would go and not compromise myself. I do not believe it of Rex : he never despised any woman ; but it is hard to hear such things, and sometimes when Fred is worse than usual and I have borne all I can bear, I go away and cry, with an intense longing for something different, which might perhaps have come to me if I had waited, and I hear Rex's boyish voice just as it sounded under the magnolias in Florida, where we played together and pelted each other with the white petals strewing the ground.

"I am not false to Fred in telling this to you, who know about my domestic life, which, after all, has some sunshine in it. Fred is not always cross. Every one has a good and a bad side, a Jekyll and Hyde, you know, and if Fred has more Hyde than Jekyll, it is not his fault, perhaps. I try him in many ways. He says I am a fool, and that I only care for his money, and if he gives me all I want I ought to be satisfied. Just now he is very good,—so good, in fact, that I wonder if he isn't going to die. I believe he thinks I am, I am so weak and tired. I have not told you, have I, that we, too, are going to Europe before long ? Switzerland is our objective point, but if I can I will persuade Fred to go to Aix, where you will be. That will be jolly. I wonder if your Mrs. Hallam can be Rex's aunt."

"Did you ever see her ?" Bertha asked, and Louie replied :

"Only in the distance. She was in Saratoga with him, but at another hotel. I heard she was a very swell woman with piles of money, and that when young she had made shoes and worked in a factory, or something."

"How shocking!" Bertha said, laughingly, and Louie rejoined:

"Don't be sarcastic. You know I don't care what she used to do. Why should I, when I have dusted and washed dishes myself, and waited on a lot of Northern boarders, with my proud Southern blood in hot rebellion against it? If Mrs. Hallam made shoes or cloth, what does it matter, so long as she is rich now and in the best society? She is no blood relation to Rex, who is a gentleman by birth and nature both. I hope Mrs. Carter is his aunt, for then you will see him; and if you do, tell him I am your cousin, but not how wretched I am. He saw a little in Saratoga, but not much, for Fred was very guarded. Hark! I believe I hear him coming."

There was a bright flush on her cheeks as she started up and began to smooth the folds of her dress and to arrange her hair.

"Fred does not like to see me tumbled," she said, just as the portière was drawn aside and her husband entered the room.

He was a tall and rather fine-looking man of thirty, with large, fierce black eyes and an expression on his face and about his mouth indicative of an indomitable will and a temper hard to meet. He had come in, he said, to take Louie for a drive, as the day was fine and the air would do her good; and he was so gracious to Bertha that she felt sure the Jekyll mood was in the ascendant. He asked her if she was still with Swartz & Co., and listened with some interest while Louie told him of her engagement with Mrs. Carter Hallam, and when she asked if that lady was Rex's aunt, he replied

that she was, adding that Rex's uncle had adopted him as a son and had left a large fortune.

Then, turning to Bertha, he said, "I congratulate you on your prospective acquaintance with Rex Hallam. He is very susceptible to female charms, and quite indiscriminate in his attentions. Every woman, old or young, is apt to think he is in love with her."

He spoke sarcastically, with a meaning look at his wife, whose face was scarlet. Bertha was angry, and, with a proud inclination of her head, said to him :

"It is not likely that I shall see much of Mr. Reginald Hallam. Why should I, when I am only his aunt's hired companion, and have few charms to attract him ?"

"I am not so sure of that," Fred said, struck as he had never been before with Bertha's beauty, as she stood confronting him.

She was a magnificent-looking girl, who, given a chance, would throw Louie quite in the shade, he thought, and under the fascination of her beauty he became more gracious than ever, and asked her to drive with them and return to lunch.

"Oh, do," Louie said. "It is ages since you were here."

But Bertha declined, as she had shopping to do, and in the afternoon was going home to stay until it was time to report herself to Mrs. Hallam. Then, bidding them good-bye, she left the house and went rapidly down the avenue.

CHAPTER V.

THE COMPANION.

BERTHA kept up very bravely when she said good-bye to her father and Dorcas and started alone for New York ; but there was a horrid sense of loneliness and homesickness in her heart when at about six in the afternoon she rang the bell of No. — Fifth Avenue, looking in her sailor hat and tailor-made gown and Eton jacket of dark blue serge more like the daughter of the house than like a hired companion. Peters, the colored man who opened the door, mistook her for an acquaintance, and was very deferential in his manner, while he waited for her card. By mistake her cards were in her trunk, and she said to him, "Tell Mrs. Hallam that Miss Leighton is here. She is expecting me."

Mrs. Hallam's servants usually managed to know the most of their mistress's business, for, although she professed to keep them at a distance, she was at times quite confidential, and they all knew that a Miss Leighton was to accompany her abroad as a companion. So when Peters heard the name he changed his intention to usher her into the reception-room, and, seating her in the hall, went for a maid, who took her to a room on the fourth floor back and told her that Mrs. Hallam had just gone in to dinner with some friends and would not be at liberty to see her for two or three hours.

"But she is expecting you," she said, "and has given orders that you can have your dinner served here, or

if you choose, you can dine with Mrs. Flagg, the housekeeper, in her room in the front basement. I should go there, if I were you. You'll find it pleasanter and cooler than up here under the roof."

Bertha preferred the housekeeper's room, to which she was taken by the maid. Mrs. Flagg was a kind-hearted, friendly woman, who, with the quick instincts of her class, recognized Bertha as a lady and treated her accordingly. She had lived with the Hallams many years, and, with a natural pride in the family, talked a good deal of her mistress's wealth and position, but more of Mr. Reginald, who had a pleasant word for everybody, high or low, rich or poor.

"Mrs. Hallam is not exactly that way," she said, "and sometimes snubs folks beneath her ; but I've heard Mr. Reginald tell her that civil words don't cost anything, and the higher up you are and the surer of yourself the better you can afford to be polite to every one ; that a gold piece is none the less gold because there is a lot of copper pennies in the purse with it, nor a real lady any the less a lady because she is kind of chummy with her inferiors. He's great on comparisons."

As Bertha made no comment, she continued, "He's Mrs. Hallam's nephew, or rather her husband's, but the same as her son ;" adding that she was sorry he was not at home, as she'd like Miss Leighton to see him.

When dinner was over she offered to take Bertha back to her room, and as they passed an open door on the third floor she stopped a moment and said, "This is Mr. Reginald's room. Would you like to go in ?"

Bertha did not care particularly about it, but as Mrs. Flagg stepped inside, she followed her. Just then some one from the hall called to Mrs. Flagg, and, excusing

herself for a moment, she went out, leaving Bertha alone. It was a luxuriously furnished apartment, with signs of masculine ownership everywhere, but what attracted Bertha most was a large mirror which, in a Florentine frame, covered the entire chimney above the mantel and was ornamented with photographs on all its four sides. There were photographs of personal friends and prominent artists, authors, actors, opera-singers, and ballet-dancers, with a few of horses and dogs, divided into groups, with a blank space between. Bertha had no difficulty in deciding which were his friends, for there confronting her, with her sunny smile and laughing blue eyes, was Louie's picture given to him at Saratoga, and placed by the side of a sweet-faced, refined-looking woman wearing a rather old-style dress, who, Bertha fancied, might be his mother.

"How lovely Louie is," she thought, "and what a different life hers would have been had her friendship for Reginald Hallam ripened into love, as it ought to have done!" Then, casting her eyes upon another group, she started violently as she saw herself tucked in between a rope-walker and a ballet-dancer. "What does it mean? and how did my picture get here?" she exclaimed, taking it from the frame and wondering still more when she read upon it, "Rose Arabella Jefferson, Scotsburg."

"Rose Arabella Jefferson!" she repeated. "Who is she? and how came her name on my picture? and how came my picture in Rex Hallam's possession?" Then, remembering that she had sent it by request to Mrs. Hallam, she guessed how Rex came by it, and felt a little thrill of pride that he had liked it well enough to give it a place in his collection, even if it were in com-

pany with ballet-girls. "But it shall not stay there," she thought. "I'll put it next to Louie's, and let him wonder who changed it, if he ever notices the change."

Mrs. Flagg was coming, and, hastily putting the photograph between Louie's and that of a woman who she afterwards found was Mrs. Carter Hallam, she went out to meet the housekeeper, whom she followed to her room.

"You will not be afraid, as the servants all sleep up here. We have six besides the coachman," Mrs. Flagg said as she bade her good-night.

"Six servants besides the coachman and housekeeper! I make the ninth, for I dare say I am little more than that in my lady's estimation," Bertha thought, as she sat alone, watching the minute-hand of the clock creeping slowly round, and wondering when the grand dinner would be over and Mrs. Hallam ready to receive her. Then, lest the lump in her throat should get the mastery, she began to walk up and down her rather small quarters, to look out of the window upon the roofs of the houses, and to count the chimneys and spires in the distance.

It was very different from the lookout at home, with its long stretch of wooded hills, its green fields and meadows and grassy lane. Once her tears were threatening every moment to start, when a maid appeared and said her mistress was at liberty to see her. With a beating heart and heightened color, Bertha followed her to the boudoir, where, in amber satin and diamonds Mrs. Hallam was waiting, herself somewhat flurried and nervous and doubtful how to conduct herself during the interview. She was always a little uncertain how to maintain a dignity worthy of Mrs. Carter Hallam

under all circumstances, for, although she had been in society so long and had seen herself quoted and her dinners and receptions described so often, she was not yet quite sure of herself, nor had she learned the truth of Rex's theory that gold was not the less gold because in the same purse with pennies. She had never forgotten the shoe-shop and the barefoot girl picking berries, with all the other humble surroundings of her childhood, and because she had not she felt it incumbent upon her to try to prove that she was and always had been what she seemed to be, a leader of fashion, with millions at her command. To compass this she assumed an air of haughty superiority towards those whom she thought her inferiors. She had never hired a companion, and in the absence of her mentor, Mrs. Walker Haynes, she did not know exactly how to treat one. Had she asked Rex, he would have said, "Treat her as you would any other young lady." But Rex held some very ultra views, and was not to be trusted implicitly. Fortunately, however, a guest at dinner had helped her greatly by recounting her own experience with a companion who was always getting out of her place, and who finally ran off with a French count at Trouville, where they were spending the summer.

"I began wrong," the lady said. "I was too familiar at first, and made too much of her because she was educated and superior to her class."

Acting upon this intimation, Mrs. Hallam decided to commence right. Remembering the picture which Rex called Squint-Eye, she had no fear that the original would ever run off with a French count, but she might have to be put down, and she would begin by sitting down to receive her. "Standing will make her too

much my equal," she thought, and, adjusting the folds of her satin gown and assuming an expression which she meant to be very cold and distant, she glanced up carelessly, but still a little nervously, as she heard the sound of footsteps and knew there was some one at the door. She was expecting a very ordinary-looking person, with wide mouth, half-closed eyes, and light hair, and when she saw a tall, graceful girl, with dark hair and eyes, brilliant color, and an air decidedly patrician, as Mrs. Walker Haynes would say, she was startled out of her dignity, and involuntarily rose to her feet and half extended her hand. Then, remembering herself, she dropped it, and said, stammeringly, "Oh, are you Miss Leighton?"

"Yes, madam. You were expecting me, were you not?" Bertha answered, her voice clear and steady, with no sound of timidity or awe in it.

"Why, yes; that is—sit down, please. There is some mistake," Mrs. Hallam faltered. "You are not like your photograph, or the one I took for you. They must have gotten mixed, as Rex said they did. He insisted that your letter did not belong to what I said was your photograph and which he called Squint-Eye."

Here it occurred to Mrs. Hallam that she was not commencing right at all,—that she was quite too communicative to a girl who looked fully equal to running off with a duke, if she chose, and who must be kept down. But she explained about the letters and the photographs until Bertha had a tolerably correct idea of the mistake and laughed heartily over it. It was a very merry, musical laugh, in which Mrs. Hallam joined for a moment. Then, resuming her haughty manner,

she plied Bertha with questions, saying to her first, "Your home is in Boston, I believe?"

"Oh, no," Bertha replied. "My home is in Leicester, where I was born."

"In Leicester!" Mrs. Hallam replied, her voice indicative of surprise and disapprobation. "You wrote me from Boston. Why did you do that?"

Bertha explained why, and Mrs. Hallam asked next if she lived in the village or the country.

"In the country, on a farm," Bertha answered, wondering at Mrs. Hallam's evident annoyance at finding that she came from Leicester instead of Boston.

It had not before occurred to her to connect the Homestead with Mrs. Carter Hallam, but it came to her now, and at a venture she said, "Our place is called the Hallam Homestead, named for a family who lived there many years ago."

She was looking curiously at Mrs. Hallam, whose face was crimson at first and then grew pale, but who for a moment made no reply. Here was a complication,—Leicester, and perhaps the old life, brought home to her by the original of the picture so much admired by Rex, who had it in mind to buy the old Homestead, and was sure to admire the girl when he saw her, as he would, for he was coming to Aix-les-Bains some time during the summer. If Mrs. Hallam could have found an excuse for it, she would have dismissed Bertha at once. But there was none. She was there, and she must keep her, and perhaps it might be well to be frank with her to a certain extent. So she said at last, "My husband's family once lived in Leicester,—presumably on your father's farm. That was years ago, before I was married. My nephew, Mr. Reginald" (she laid much

stress on the *Mr.*, as if to impress Bertha with the distance there was between them), has, I believe, some quixotic notion about buying the old place. Is it for sale?"

The fire which flashed into Bertha's eyes and the hot color which stained her cheeks startled Mrs. Hallam, who was not prepared for Bertha's excitement as she replied, "For sale! Never! There is a mortgage of long standing on it, but it will be paid in the fall. I am going with you to earn the money to pay it. Nothing else would take me from father and Dorcas so long. We heard there was a New York man wishing to buy it, but he may as well think of buying the Coliseum as our home. Tell him so, please, for me. Hallam Homestead is *not* for sale."

As she talked, Bertha grew each moment more earnest and excited and beautiful, with the tears shining in her eyes and the bright color on her cheeks. Mrs. Hallam was not a hard woman, nor a bad woman; she was simply calloused over with false ideas of caste and position, which prompted her to restrain her real nature whenever it asserted itself, as it was doing now. Something about Bertha fascinated and interested her, bringing back the long ago, with the odor of the pines, the perfume of the pond-lilies, and the early days of her married life. But this feeling soon passed. Habit is everything, and she had been the fashionable Mrs. Carter Hallam so long that it would take more than a memory of the past to change her. She must maintain her dignity, and not give way to sentiment, and she was soon herself, cold and distant, with her chin in the air, where she usually carried it when talking to those whom she wished to impress with her superiority.

For some time longer she talked to Bertha, and learned as much of her history as Bertha chose to tell. Her mother was born in Georgia, she said ; her father in Boston. He was a Yale graduate, and fonder of books than of farming. They were poor, keeping no servants ; Dorcas, her only sister, kept the house, while she did what she could to help pay expenses and lessen the mortgage on the farm. All this Bertha told readily enough, with no thought of shame for her poverty. She saw that Mrs. Hallam was impressed with the Southern mother and scholarly father, and once she thought to speak of her cousin, Mrs. Louie, but did not, and here she possibly made a mistake, for Mrs. Hallam had a great respect for family connections, as that was what she lacked. She had heard of Mrs. Fred Thurston, as had every frequenter of Saratoga and Newport, and once at the former place she had seen her driving in her husband's stylish turnout with Reginald at her side. He was very attentive to the beauty whom he had known at the South, and Mrs. Hallam had once or twice intimated to him that she, too, would like to meet her, but he had not acted upon the hint, and she had left Saratoga without accomplishing her object. Had Bertha told of the relationship between herself and Louie, it might have made some difference in her relations with her employer. But she did not, and after a little further catechising Mrs. Hallam dismissed her, saying, " As the ship sails at nine, it will be necessary to rise very early ; so I will bid you good-night."

The next morning Bertha breakfasted with Mrs. Flagg, who told her that, as a friend was to accompany Mrs. Hallam in her coupè to the ship, she was to go in a street car, with a maid to show her the way.

"Evidently I am a hired servant and nothing more," Bertha thought; "but I can endure even that for the sake of Europe and five hundred dollars." And, bidding good-bye to Mrs. Flagg, she was soon on her way to the Teutonic.

CHAPTER VI.

ON THE TEUTONIC.

BERTHA found Mrs. Hallam in her state-room, which was one of the largest and most expensive on the ship. With her were three or four ladies who were there to say good-bye, all talking together and offering advice in case of sickness, while Mrs. Hallam fanned herself vigorously, as the morning was very hot.

"Are you not taking a maid?" one of the ladies asked, and Mrs. Hallam replied that Mrs. Haynes advised her to get one in Paris, adding, "I have a young girl as companion, and I'm sure I don't know where she is. She ought to be here by this time. I dare say she will be more trouble than good. She seems quite the fine lady. I hardly know what I am to do with her."

"Keep her in her place," was the prompt advice of a little, common-looking woman, who was once a nursery governess, but was now a millionaire, and perfectly competent to advise as to the proper treatment of a companion.

Just then Bertha appeared, and was stared at by the ladies, who took no further notice of her.

"I am glad you've got here at last. What kept you so long?" Mrs. Hallam asked, a little petulantly, while Bertha replied that she had been detained by a block in the street cars, and asked if there was anything she could do.

"Yes," Mrs. Hallam answered. "I wish you would open my sea trunk and satchel, and get out my wrapper, and shawl, and cushion, and toilet articles, and salts, and camphor. I am sure to be sick the minute we get out to sea." And handing her keys to Bertha, she went with her friends outside, where the crowd was increasing every moment.

The passenger list was full, and every passenger had at least half a dozen acquaintances to see him off, so that by the time Bertha had arranged Mrs. Hallam's belongings, and gone out on deck, there was hardly standing room. Finding a seat near the purser's office, she sat down and watched the surging mass of human beings, jostling, pushing, crowding each other, the confusion reaching its climax when the order came for the ship to be cleared of all visitors. Then for a time they stood so thickly around her that she could see nothing and hear nothing but a confused babel of voices, until suddenly there was a break in the ranks, and a tall young man, who had been fighting his way to the plank, pitched headlong against her with such force that she fell from the seat, losing her hat in the fall, and striking her forehead on a sharp point near her.

"I beg your pardon; are you much hurt? I am so sorry, but I could not help it, they pushed me so in this infernal crowd. Let me help you up," a pleasant, manly voice, full of concern, said to her, while two strong hands lifted her to her feet, and on to the seat where

she had been sitting. "You are safe here, unless some other blunderhead knocks you down again," the young man continued, as he managed to pick up her hat. "Some wretch has stepped on it, but I think I can doctor it into shape," he said, giving it a twist or two, and then putting it very carefully on Bertha's head hind side before. "There! It is all right, I think, though, upon my soul, it does seem a little askew," he added, looking for the first time fully at Bertha, who was holding her hand to her forehead, where a big bump was beginning to show.

Her hand hid a portion of her face, but she smiled brightly and gratefully upon the stranger, whose manner was so friendly and whose brown eyes seen through his glasses looked so kindly at her.

"By Jove, you are hurt," he continued, "and I did it. I can't help you, as I've got to go, but my aunt is on board,—Mrs. Carter Hallam; find her, and tell her that her awkward nephew came near knocking your brains out. She has every kind of drug and lotion imaginable, from morphine to Pond's extract, and is sure to find something for that bump. And now I must go or be carried off."

He gave another twist to her hat and offered her his hand, and then ran down the plank to the wharf, where, with hundreds of others, he stood, waving his hat and cane to his friends on the ship, which began to move slowly from the dock. He was so tall that Bertha could see him distinctly, and she stood watching him and him alone, until he was a speck in the distance. Then, with a feeling of loneliness, she started for her state-room, where Mrs. Hallam, who had preceded her, was looking rather cross and doing her best to be sick,

although as yet there was scarcely any motion to the vessel.

Reginald, whose train was late, had hurried at once to the ship, which he reached in time to see his aunt for a few moments only. Her last friend had said good-bye, and she was feeling very forlorn, and wondering where Bertha could be, when he came rushing up, bringing so much life and sunshine and magnetism with him that Mrs. Hallam began to feel doubly forlorn as she wondered what she should do without him.

"Oh, Rex," she said, laying her head on his arm and beginning to cry a little, "I am so glad you have come, and I wish you were going with me. I fear I have made a mistake starting off alone. I don't know at all how to take care of myself."

Rex smoothed her hair, patted her hand, soothed her as well as he could, and told her he was sure she would get on well enough and that he would certainly join her in August.

"Where is Miss Leighton? Hasn't she put in an appearance?" he asked, and his aunt replied, with a little asperity of manner:

"Yes; she came last night, and she seems a high and mighty sort of damsel. I am disappointed, and afraid I shall have trouble with her."

"Sit down on her if she gets too high and mighty," Rex said, laughingly, while his aunt was debating the propriety of telling him of the mistake and who Bertha was.

"I don't believe I will. He will find it out soon enough," she thought, just as the last warning to leave

the boat was given, and with a hurried good-bye Rex left her, saying, as he did so :

"I'll look a bit among the crowd, and if I find your squint-eyed damsel I'll send her to you. I shall know her in a minute."

Here was a good chance to explain, but Mrs. Hallam let it pass, and Rex went his way, searching here and there for a light-haired, weak-eyed woman answering to her photograph.

But he did not find her, and ran instead against Bertha, with no suspicion that she was the girl he had told his aunt to sit on, and for whom that lady waited rather impatiently after the ship was cleared.

"Oh !" she said, as Bertha came in. "I have been waiting for you some time. Did you have friends to say good-bye to? Give me my salts, please, and camphor, and fan, and a pillow, and close that shutter. I don't want the herd looking in upon me ; nor do I think this room so very desirable, with all the people passing and repassing. I told Rex so, and he said nobody wanted to see me in my night-cap. He was here to say good-bye. His train got in just in time."

Bertha closed the shutters and brought a pillow and fan and the camphor and salts, and then bathed the bruise on her forehead, which was increasing in size and finally attracted Mrs. Hallam's attention.

"Are you hurt?" she asked, and Bertha replied, "I was knocked down in the crowd by a young man who told me he had an aunt, a Mrs. Hallam, on board. I suppose he must have been your nephew."

"Did you tell him who you were?" Mrs. Hallam asked, with a shake of her head and disapproval in her voice,

"No, madam," Bertha replied. "He was trying to apologize for what he had done, and spoke to me of you as one to whom I could go for help if I was badly hurt."

"Yes, that is like Reginald,—thinking of everything," Mrs. Hallam said. After a moment she added, "He has lived with me since he was a boy, and is the same as a son. He will join me in Aix-les-Bains in August. Miss Grace Haynes is there, and I don't mind telling you, as you will probably see for yourself, that I think there is a sort of understanding between him and her. Nothing would please me better."

"There! I have headed off any idea she might possibly have with regard to Rex, who is so democratic and was so struck with her photograph, while she,—well, there is something in her eyes and the lofty way she carries her head and shoulders that I don't like; it looks too much like equality, and I am afraid I may have to sit on her, as Rex bade me do," was Mrs. Hallam's mental comment, as she adjusted herself upon her couch and issued her numerous orders.

For three days she stayed in her state-room, not because she was actually sea-sick, but because she feared she would be. To lie perfectly quiet in her berth until she was accustomed to the motion of the vessel was the advice given her by one of her friends, and as far as possible she followed it, while Bertha was kept in constant attendance, reading to her, brushing her hair, bathing her head, opening and shutting the windows, and taking messages to those of her acquaintances able to be on deck. The sea was rather rough for June, but Bertha was not at all affected by it, and the only inconvenience she suffered was want of sufficient exercise and fresh air. Early in the morning, while Mrs. Hallam

slept, she was free to go on deck, and again late in the evening, after the lady had retired for the night. These walks, with going to her meals, were the only recreation or change she had, and she was beginning to droop a little, when at last Mrs. Hallam declared herself able to go upon deck, where, by the aid of means which seldom fail, she managed to gain possession of the sunniest and most sheltered spot, which she held in spite of the protestations of another party who claimed the place on the ground of first occupancy. She was Mrs. Carter Hallam, and she kept the field until a vacancy occurred in the vicinity of some people whom to know, if possible, was desirable. Then she moved, and had her reward in being told by one of the magnates that it was a fine day and the ship was making good time.

Every morning Bertha brought her rugs and wraps and cushions and umbrella, and after seeing her comfortably adjusted sat down at a respectful distance and waited for orders, which were far more frequent than was necessary. No one spoke to her, although many curious and admiring glances were cast at the bright, handsome girl who seemed quite as much a lady as her mistress, but who was performing the duties of a maid and was put down upon the passenger-list as Mrs. Hallam's companion. As it chanced, there was a royal personage on board, and one day when standing near Bertha, who was watching a steamer just appearing upon the horizon, he addressed some remark to her, and then, attracted by something in her face, or manner, or both, continued to talk with her, until Mrs. Hallam's peremptory voice called out :

"Bertha, I want you. Don't you see my rug is falling off ?"

There was a questioning glance at the girl thus bidden and at the woman who bade her, and then, lifting his hat politely to the former, the stranger walked away, while Bertha went to Mrs. Hallam, who said to her sharply :

" I wonder at your presumption ; but possibly you did not know to whom you were talking ?"

" Oh, yes, I did," Bertha replied. " It was the prince. He speaks English fluently, and I found him very agreeable."

She was apparently as unconcerned as if it had been the habit of her life to consort with royalty, and Mrs. Hallam looked at her wonderingly, conscious in her narrow soul of an increased feeling of respect for the girl whom a prince had honored with his notice and who took it so coolly and naturally. But she did not abate her requirements or exactions in the least. On the contrary, it seemed as if she increased them. But Bertha bore it all patiently, performing every task imposed upon her as if it were a pleasure, and never giving any sign of fatigue, although in reality she was never so tired in her life as when at last they sailed up the Mersey and into the docks at Liverpool.

At Queenstown she sent off a letter to Dorcas, in which, after speaking of her arrival in New York and the voyage in general, she wrote, " I hardly know what to say of Mrs. Hallam until I have seen more of her. She is a great lady, and great ladies need a great deal of waiting upon, and the greater they are the greater their need. There must be something Shylocky in her nature, and, as she gives me a big salary, she means to have her pound of flesh. I am down on the passenger list as her companion, but it should be maid, as I am

really that. But when we reach Paris there will be a change, as she is to have a French maid there. It will surprise you, as it did me, to know that she belongs to the Hallams for whom the Homestead was named and who father thought were all dead. Her husband was born there. Where she came from I do not know. She is very reticent on that point. I shouldn't be surprised if she once worked in a factory, she is so particular to have her position recognized. Such a scramble as she had to get to the captain's table; though what good that does I cannot guess, inasmuch as he is seldom there himself. I am at *Nobody's* table, and like it, because I am a nobody.

"Do you remember the letter father had, saying that some New Yorker wanted to buy our farm and was coming to look at it? That New Yorker is cousin Louie's Reginald Hallam, of whom I told you, and Mrs. Carter's nephew; not in the least like her, I fancy, although I have only had the pleasure of being knocked down by him on the ship. But he was not to blame. The crowd pushed him against me with such force that I fell off the seat and nearly broke my head. My hat was crushed out of all shape, and he made it worse trying to twist it back. He was kindness itself, and his brown eyes full of concern as they looked at me through the clearest pair of rimless glasses I ever saw. He did not know who I was, of course, but I am sure he would have been just as kind if he had. I can understand Louie's infatuation for him, and why his aunt adores him.

"But what nonsense to be writing with Queenstown in sight, and this letter must be finished to send off. I am half ashamed of what I have said of Mrs. Hallam,

who when she forgets what a grand lady she is, can be very nice, and I really think she likes me a little.

"And now I must close, with more love for you and father than can be carried in a hundred letters. Will write again from Paris. Good-bye, good-bye.

"BERTHA.

"P. S. I told you that if a New Yorker came to buy the farm you were to shut the door in his face. But you may as well let him in."

CHAPTER VII.

REGINALD AND PHINEAS JONES.

AFTER bidding his aunt good-bye, Reginald went home for a few moments, and then to his office, where he met for the first time Mr. Gorham, the owner of the Leighton mortgage, and learned that the place was really where his father used to live and that the Homestead was named for the Hallams. This increased his desire to own it, and, as there was still time to catch the next train for Boston, he started for the depot and was soon on his way to Worcester, where he arrived about four in the afternoon. Wishing to make some inquiries as to the best means of reaching Leicester, he went to a hotel, where he found no one in the office besides the clerk except a tall, spare man, with long, light hair tinged with gray, and shrewdness and

curiosity written all over his good-humored face. He wore a linen duster, with no collar, and only an apology for a handkerchief twisted around his neck. Tipping back in one chair, with his feet in another, he was taking frequent and most unsuccessful aims at a cuspidor about six feet from him.

"Good-afternoon," he said, removing his feet from the chair for a moment, but soon putting them back, as he asked if Reginald had just come from the train, and whether from the East or the West. Then he told him it was an all-fired hot day, that it looked like thunder in the west, and he shouldn't wonder if they got a heavy shower before night.

To all this Reginald assented, and then went to the desk to register, while the stranger, on pretense of looking at something in the street, also arose and sauntered to the door, managing to glance at the register and see the name just written there.

Resuming his seat and inviting Rex to take a chair near him, he began: "I b'lieve you're from New York. I thought so the minute you came in. I have traveled from Dan to Beersheba, and been through the war,—was a corp'ral there,—and I generally spot you fellows when I first put my eye on you. I am Phineas Jones,—Phin for short. I hain't any real profession, but am jack at all trades and good at none. Everybody knows me in these parts, and I know everybody."

Rex, who began to be greatly amused with this queer specimen, bowed an acknowledgment of the honor of knowing Mr. Jones, who said, "Be you acquainted in Worcester?"

"Not at all. Was never here before," was Rex's reply, and Phineas continued: Slow old place, some

think, but I like it. Full of nice folks of all sorts, with clubs, and lodges, and societies, and no end of squabbles about temperance and city officers and all that. As for music,—my land, I'd smile to see any place hold a candle to us. Had all the crack singers here, even to the diver."

Rex, who had listened rather indifferently to Phineas's laudations of Worcester, now asked if he knew much of the adjoining towns,—Leicester, for instance.

"Wa-all, I'd smile," Phineas replied, with a fierce assault upon the cuspidor. "Yes, I would smile if I didn't know Leicester. Why, I was born there, and it's always been my native town, except two or three years in Sturbridge, when I was a shaver, and the time I was to the war and travelin' round. Pleasant town, but dull,—with no steam cars nigher than Rochdale or Worcester. Got stages and an electric car to Spencer;—run every half-hour. Think of goin' there?"

Rex said he did, and asked the best way of getting there.

"Wa-all, there's four ways,—the stage, but that's gone; hire a team and drive out,—that's expensive; take the steam cars for Rochdale, or Jamesville, and then drive out,—that's expensive, too; or take the electric, which is cheaper, and pleasanter, and quicker. Know anybody in Leicester?"

Rex said he didn't, and asked if Phineas knew a place called Hallam Homestead.

"Wa-all, I'd smile if I didn't," Phineas replied. "Why, I've worked in hayin'-time six or seven summers for Square Leighton. He was 'lected justice of the peace twelve or fifteen years ago, and I call him Square yet, as a title seems to suit him, he's so different-

lookin' from most farmers,—kind of high-toned, you know. Ort to have been an aristocrat. As to the Hallams, who used to own the place, I've heard of 'em ever since I was knee-high ; I was acquainted with Carter ; first-rate feller. By the way, your name is Hallam. Any kin ?"

Rex explained his relationship to the Hallams, while the smile habitual to Phineas's face, and which, with the expressions he used so often, had given him the *sobriquet* of Smiling Phin, broadened into a loud laugh of genuine delight and surprise, and, springing up, he grasped Rex's hand, exclaiming : "This beats the Dutch ! I'm glad to see you, I be. I thought you was all dead when Carter died. There's a pile of you in the old Greenville graveyard. Why, you 'n' I must be connected."

Rex looked at him wonderingly, while he went on : "You see, Carter Hallam's wife was Lucy Ann Brown, and her great-grandmother and my great-grandfather were half brother and sister. Now, what relation be I to Lucy Ann, or to you ?"

Rex confessed his inability to trace so remote a relationship on so hot a day, and Phineas rejoined :

"'Tain't very near, that's a fact, but we're related, though I never thought Lucy Ann hankered much for my society. I used to call her cousin, which made her mad. She was a handsome girl when she clerked it here in Worcester and roped Carter in. A high stepper, —turned up her nose when I ast her for her company. That's when she was bindin' shoes, before she knew Carter. I don't s'pose I could touch her now with a ten-foot pole, though I b'lieve I'll call the fust time I'm in

New York, if you'll give me your number. Blood is blood. How is the old lady ?"

Here was a chance for Rex to inquire into his aunt's antecedents, of which he knew little, as she was very reticent with regard to her early life. He knew that she was an orphan and had no near relatives, and that she had once lived in Worcester, and that was all. The clerkship and the shoe-binding were news to him ; he did not even know before that she was Lucy Ann, as she had long ago dropped the *Ann* as too plebian ; but, with the delicacy of a true gentleman, he would not ask a question of this man, who, he was sure, would tell all he knew and a great deal more, if urged.

"I wonder what Aunt Lucy would say to being visited and cousined by this Yankee, who calls her an old lady ?" he thought, as he said that she was very well and had just sailed for Europe, adding that she was still handsome and very young-looking.

"You don't say !" Phineas exclaimed, and began at once to calculate her age, basing his data on a spelling-school in Sturbridge when she was twelve years old and had spelled him down, a circus in Fiskdale which she had attended with him when she was fifteen, and the time when he had asked for her company in Worcester. Naturally, he made her several years older than she really was.

But she was not there to protest, and Rex did not care. He was more interested in his projected purchase than in his aunt's age, and he asked if the Hallam farm were good or bad.

"Wa-all, 'taint neither," Phineas replied. "You see, it's pretty much run down for want of means and management. The Square ain't no kind of a farmer, and

never was, and he didn't ort to be one, but his wife persuaded him. My land, how a woman can twist a man round her fingers, especially if she's kittenish and pretty and soft-spoken, as the Square's wife was. She was from Georgy, and nothin' would do but she must live on a farm and have it fixed up as nigh like her father's plantation as she could. She took down the big chimbleys and built some outside,—queer-lookin' till the woodbine run up and covered 'em clear to the top, and now they're pretty. She made a bath-room out of the but'try, and a but'try out of the meal-room. She couldn't have niggers, nor, of course, nigger cabins, but she got him to build a lot of other out-houses, which cost a sight,—stables, and a dog-kennel."

"Dog-kennels!" Rex interrupted, feeling more desirous than ever for a place with kennels already in it. "How large are they?"

"There ain't but one," Phineas said, "and that ain't there now. It was turned into a pig-pen long ago, for the Square can't abide dogs; but there's a hen-house, and smoke-house, and ice-house, and house over the well, and flower-garden with box borders, and yard terraced down to the orchard, with brick walls and steps, and a dammed brook ——"

"A what?" Reginald asked, in astonishment.

"Wa-all, I should smile if you thought I meant disrespect for the Bible; I didn't. I'm a church member,—a Free Methodist and class-leader, and great on exhortin' and experiencin', they say. I don't swear. You spelt the word wrong, with an *n* instead of two *m*'s, that's what's the matter. That's the word your aunt Lucy Ann spelt me down on at the spellin'-school. We two stood up longest and were tryin' for the medal. I was

more used to the word with an *n* in it than I am now, and got beat. What I mean about the brook is that it runs acrost the road into the orchard, and Mis' Leighton had it dammed up with boards and stones to make a waterfall, with a rustic bridge below it, and a butternut tree and a seat under it, where you can set and view nature. But bless your soul, such things don't pay, and if Mis' Leighton had lived she'd of ruined the Square teetotally. but she died, poor thing, and the Square's hair turned white in six months."

"What family has Mr. Leighton?" Rex asked, and Phineas replied:

"Two girls, that's all; one handsome as blazes, like her mother, and the other—wa'all, she is nice-lookin', with a motherly, venerable kind of face that everybody trusts. She stays to hum, Dorcas does, while ——" Here he was interrupted by Rex, who, more interested just then in the farm than in the girls, asked if it was for sale.

"For sale?" Phineas replied. "I'd smile to see the Square sell his farm, though he owes a pile on it; borrows of Peter to pay Paul, you know, and so keeps a-goin'; but I don't believe he'd sell for love nor money."

"Not if he could get cash down and, say, a thousand more than it is worth?" Rex suggested.

Staggered by the thousand dollars, which seemed like a fortune to one who had never had more than a few hundred at a time in his life, Phineas gasped:

"One thousand extry! Wa-all, I swan, a thousand extry would tempt some men to sell their souls; but I don't know about it fetchin' the Square. Think of buyin' it?"

Rex said he did.

"For yourself?"

"Yes, for myself."

"*You* goin' to turn farmer?" and Phineas looked him over from head to foot. "Wa-all, if that ain't curi's. I'd smile to see you, or one of your New York dudes, a-farmin' it, with your high collars, your long coats and wide trouses and yaller shoes and canes and eye-glasses, and hands that never done a stroke of hard work in your lives. Yes, I would."

Rex had never felt so small in his life as when Phineas was drawing a picture he recognized as tolerably correct of most of his class, and he half wished his collar was a trifle lower and his coat a little shorter, but he laughed good-humoredly and said, "I am afraid we do seem a useless lot to you, and I suppose we might wear older-fashioned clothes, but I can't help the glasses. I couldn't see across the street without them."

"I want to know," Phineas said. "Wa-all, they ain't bad on you, they're so clear and hain't no rims to speak of. They make you look like a literary feller, or more like a minister. Be you a professor?"

Rex flushed a little at the close questioning, expecting to be asked next how much he was worth and where his money was invested, but he answered honestly, "I wish I could say yes, but I can't."

"What a pity! Come to one of our meetin's, and we'll convert you in no time. What persuasion be you?"

Reginald said he was an Episcopalian, and Phineas's face fell. He hadn't much faith in Episcopalians, thinking their service was mere form, with nothing in it which he could enjoy, except that he did not have to sit still long enough to get sleepy, and there were so

many places where he could come in strong with an Amen, as he always did. This opinion, however, he did not express to Reginald. He merely said, "Wa-all, there's good folks in every church. I do b'lieve the Square is pious, and he's a 'Piscopal. Took it from his Georgy wife, who had a good many other fads. You have a good face, like all the Hallams, and I b'lieve they died in the faith. Says so, anyway, on their tombstones; but monuments lie as well as obituaries. But I ain't a-goin' to discuss religious tenants, though I'm fust-rate at it, they say. I want to know what *you* want of a farm?"

Rex told him that he had long wished for a place in the country, where he could spend a part of each year with a few congenial friends, hunting and fishing and boating, and from what he had heard of the Homestead, he thought it would just suit him, there were so many hills and woods and ponds around it.

"Are there pleasant drives?" he asked, and Phineas replied:

"Tip-top, the city-folks think. Woods full of roads leading nowhere except to some old house a hundred years old or more, and the older they be the better the city folks like 'em. Why, they actu'lly go into the garrets and buy up old spinning-wheels and desks and chairs; and, my land, they're crazy over tall clocks."

Rex did not care much for the furniture of the old garrets unless it should happen to belong to the Hallams, and he asked next if there were foxes in the woods, and if he could get up a hunt with dogs and horses.

Phineas did not smile, but laughed long and loud, and deluged the cuspidor, before he replied:

"Wa-all, if I won't give up! A fox hunt, with hounds and horses, tearin' through the folks's fields and gardens! Why, you'd be mobbed. You'd be tarred and feathered. You'd be rid on a rail."

"But," Rex exclaimed, I should keep on my own premises. A man has a right to do what he pleases with his own," a remark which so affected Phineas that he doubled up with laughter, as he said:

"That's so; but, bless your soul, the Homestead farm ain't big enough for a hunt. It takes acres and acres for that, and if you had 'em the foxes wouldn't stop to ask if it's your premises or somebody else's. They ain't likely to take to the open if they can help it, but with the dogs to their heels and widder Brady's garden right before 'em they'd make a run for it. Her farm jines the Homestead, and 'twould be good as a circus to see the hounds tearin' up her sage and her gooseberries and her voilets. She'd be out with brooms and mops and pokers; and, besides that, the Leicester women would be up in arms and say 'twas cruel for a lot of men to hunt a poor fox to death just for fun. They are great on Bergh, Leicester women are, and they might arrest you."

Reginald saw his fox hunts fading into air, and was about to ask what there was in the woods which he could hunt without fear of the widow Brady or the Bergh ladies of the town, when Phineas sprang up, exclaiming:

"Hullo! there's the Square now. I saw him in town this mornin' about some plasterin' I ort to have done six weeks ago."

And he darted from the door, while Rex, looking from the window, saw an old horse drawing an old

buggy in which sat an old man, evidently intent upon avoiding a street-car rapidly approaching him, while Phineas was making frantic efforts to stop him. But a car from an opposite direction and a carriage blocked his way, and by the time these had passed the old man and buggy were too far up the street for him to be heard or to overtake them.

"I'm awful sorry," he said, as he returned to the hotel. "He was alone, and you could of rid with him as well as not and saved your fare."

Rex thanked him for his kind intentions, but said he did not mind the fare in the least and preferred the electric car. Then, as he wished to look about the city a little, he bade good-bye to Phineas, who accompanied him to the door, and said: "Mabby you'd better mention my name to the Square as a surety that you're all right. He hain't traveled as much as I have, nor seen as many swells like you, and he might take you for a confidence-man."

Rex promised to make use of his new friend if he found it necessary, and walked away, while Phineas looked after him admiringly, thinking, "That's a fine chap; not a bit stuck up. Glad I've met him, for now I shall visit Lucy Ann when she comes home. He's a little off, though, on his farm and his fox-hunts."

Meanwhile, Reginald walked through several streets, and at last found himself in the vicinity of the electric car, which he took for Leicester. It was a pleasant ride, and he enjoyed it immensely, especially after they were out in the country and began to climb the long hill. At his request he was put down at the cross-road and the gabled house pointed out to him. Very eagerly he looked about him as he went slowly up the avenue

or lane bordered with cherry-trees on one side, and on the other commanding an unobstructed view of the country for miles around, with its valleys and thickly wooded hills.

"This is charming," he said, as he turned his attention next to the house and its surroundings.

How quiet and pleasant it looked, with its gables and picturesque chimneys under the shadow of the big apple-tree in the rear and the big elm in the front! He could see the out-buildings of which Phineas had told him,—the well-house, the hen-house, the smoke-house, the ice-house and stable,—and could hear the faint sound of the brook in the orchard falling over the dam into the basin below.

"I wish I had lived here when a boy, as my father and uncle did," he thought, just as a few big drops of rain fell upon the grass, and he noticed for the first time how black it was overhead, and how threatening were the clouds rolling up so fast from the west.

It had been thundering at intervals ever since he left Worcester, and in the sultry air there was that stillness which portends the coming of a severe storm. But he had paid no attention to it, and now he did not hasten his steps until there came a deafening crash of thunder, followed instantaneously by a drenching downpour of rain, which seemed to come in sheets rather than in drops, and he knew that in a few minutes he would be wet through, as his coat was rather thin and he had no umbrella. He was still some little distance from the house, but by running swiftly he was soon under the shelter of the piazza, and knocking at the door, with a hope that it might be opened by the girl who Phineas had said "was handsome as blazes."

CHAPTER VIII.

REX AT THE HOMESTEAD.

THE day had been longer and lonelier to Dorcas than the previous one, for then she had gone with Bertha to the train in Worcester, and after saying good-bye, had done some shopping in town and made a few calls before returning home. She had then busied herself with clearing up Bertha's room, which was not an altogether easy task. Bertha was never as orderly as her sister, and, in the confusion of packing, her room was in a worse condition than usual. But to clear it up was a labor of love, over which Dorcas lingered as long as possible. Then when all was done and she had closed the shutters and dropped the shades, she knelt by the white bed and amid a rain of tears prayed God to protect the dear sister on sea and land and bring her safely back to the home which was so desolate without her. That was yesterday; but to-day there had been comparatively nothing to do, for after an early breakfast her father had started for Boylston, hoping to collect a debt which had long been due and the payment of which would help towards the mortgage. After he had gone and her morning work was done, Dorcas sat down alone in the great, lonely house and began to cry, wondering what she should do to pass the long hours before her father's return.

"I wish I had Bertha's room to straighten up again," she thought. "Any way I'll go and look at it." And, drying her eyes, she went up to the room, which seemed

so dark and close and gloomy that she opened the windows and threw back the blinds, letting in the full sunlight and warm summer air. "She was fond of air and sunshine," she said to herself, remembering the many times they had differed on that point, she insisting that so much sun faded the carpets, and Bertha insisting that she would have it, carpets or no carpets. Bertha was fond of flowers, too, and in their season kept the house full of them. This Dorcas also remembered, and, going to the garden, she gathered great clusters of roses and white lilies, which she arranged in two bouquets, putting one on the bureau and the other on the deep window-seat, where Bertha used to sit so often when at home, and where one of her favorite books was lying, with her work-basket and a bit of embroidery she had played at doing. The book and the basket Dorcas had left on the window-seat with something of the feeling which prompts us to keep the rooms of our dead as they left them. At the side of the bed and partly under it she had found a pair of half-worn slippers, which Bertha was in the habit of wearing at night while undressing, and these she had also left, they looked so much like Bertha, with their worn toes and high French heels. Now as she saw them she thought to put them away, but decided to leave them, as it was not likely any one would occupy the room in Bertha's absence.

"There, it looks more cheerful now," she said, surveying the apartment with its sunlight and flowers. Then, going down-stairs she whiled away the hours as best she could until it was time to prepare supper for her father, whose coming she watched for anxiously, hoping he would reach home before the storm which was fast gathering in the west and sending out flashes

of lightning, with angry growls of thunder. "He will be hungry and tired, and I mean to give him his favorite dishes," she thought, as she busied herself in the kitchen. With a view to make his home-coming as pleasant as possible, she laid the table with the best cloth and napkins and the gilt band china, used only on great occasions, and put on a plate for Bertha, and a bowl of roses in the centre, with one or two buds at each plate, "Now, that looks nice," she thought, surveying her work, with a good deal of satisfaction, "and father will be pleased. I wish he would come. How black the sky is getting, and how angry the clouds look!" Then she thought of Bertha on the sea, and wondered if the storm would reach her, and was silently praying that it would not, when she saw old Bush and the buggy pass the windows, and in a few moments her father came in looking very pale and tired. He had had a long ride for nothing, as the man who owed him could not pay, but he brightened at once when he saw the attractive tea-table and divined why all the best things were out.

"You are a good girl, Dorcas, and I don't know what I should do without you now," he said, stroking Dorcas's hair caressingly, and adding, "Now let us have supper. I am hungry as a bear, as Bertha would say."

Dorcas started to leave the room just as she heard the sound of the bell and knew the electric car was coming up the hill. Though she had seen it so many times, she always stopped to look at it, and she stopped now and saw Reginald alight from it and saw the conductor point towards their house as if directing him to it. "Who can it be?" she thought, calling her father to the window, where they both stood watching the stranger

as he came slowly along the avenue. "How queerly he acts, stopping so much to look around! Don't he know it is beginning to rain?" she said, just as the crash and downpour came which sent Rex flying towards the house.

"Oh, father!" Dorcas exclaimed, clutching his arm, "don't you know, Mr. Gorham wrote that the New Yorker who wanted to buy our farm might come to look at it? I believe this is he. What shall we do with him? Bertha told us to shut the door in his face."

"You would hardly keep a dog out in a storm like this. Why, I can't see across the road. I never knew it rain so fast," Mr. Leighton replied, as Rex's knock sounded on the door, which Dorcas opened just as a vivid flash of lightning lit up the sky and was followed instantaneously by a deafening peal of thunder and a dash of rain which swept half-way down the hall.

"Oh, my!" Dorcas said, holding back her dress; and "Great Scott!" Rex exclaimed, as he sprang inside and helped her close the door. Then, turning to her, he said, with a smile which disarmed her at once of any prejudice she might have against him, "I beg your pardon for coming in so unceremoniously. I should have been drenched in another minute. Does Mr. Leighton live here?"

Dorcas said he did, and, opening a door to her right, bade him enter. Glancing in, Rex felt sure it was the best room, and drew back, saying, apologetically, "I am not fit to go in there, or indeed to go anywhere. I believe I am wet to the skin. Look," and he pointed to the little puddles of water which had dripped from his coat and were running over the floor.

His concern was so genuine, and the eyes so kind

which looked at Dorcas, that he did not seem like a stranger, and she said to him, "I should say you were wet. You'd better take off your coat and let me dry it by the kitchen fire or you will take cold."

"She *is* a motherly little girl, as Phineas Jones said," Rex thought, feeling sure that this was not the one who was "handsome as blazes," but the nice one, who thought of everything, and if his first smile had not won her his second would have done so, as he said, "Thanks. You are very kind, but I'll not trouble you to do that, and perhaps I'd better introduce myself. I am Reginald Hallam, from New York, and my father used to live here."

"Oh-h!" Dorcas exclaimed, her fear of the dreaded stranger who was coming to buy their farm vanishing at once, while she wondered in a vague way where she had heard the name before, but did not associate it with Louie Thurston's hero, of whom Bertha had told her.

He was one of the Hallams, of whom the old people in town thought so much, and it was natural that he should wish to see the old Homestead. At this point Mr. Leighton came into the hall and was introduced to the stranger, whom he welcomed cordially, while Dorcas, with her hospitable instincts in full play, again insisted that he should remove his wet coat and shoes before he took cold.

"They are a little damp, that's a fact; but what can I do without them?" Reginald replied, beginning to feel very uncomfortable, and knowing that in all probability a sore throat would be the result of his bath.

"I'll tell you," Dorcas said, looking at her father. "He can wear the dressing-gown and slippers Bertha

gave you last Christmas." And before Rex could stop her she was off up-stairs in her father's bedroom, from which she returned with a pair of Turkish slippers and a soft gray cashmere dressing-gown with dark-blue velvet collar and cuffs.

"Father never wore them but a few times; he says they are too fine," she said to Rex, who, much against his will, soon found himself arrayed in Mr. Leighton's gown and slippers, while Dorcas carried his wet coat and shoes in triumph to the kitchen fire.

"Well, this is a lark," Rex thought as he caught sight of himself in the glass. "I wonder what Phineas Jones would say if he knew that instead of being taken for a confidence man I'm received as a son and a brother and dressed up in 'the Square's' best clothes."

Supper was ready by this time, and without any demur, which he knew would be useless, Rex sat down to the table which Dorcas had made so pretty, rejoicing now that she had done so, wondering if their guest would notice it, and feeling glad that he was in Bertha's chair. He did notice everything, and especially the flowers and the extra seat, which he occupied, and which he knew was not put there for him, but probably for the handsome girl, who would come in when the storm was over, and he found himself thinking more of her than of the blessing which Mr. Leighton asked so reverently, adding a petition that God would care for the loved one wherever and in whatever danger she might be.

"Maybe that's the girl; but where the dickens can she be that she's in danger?" Rex thought, just as a clap of thunder louder than any which had preceded

it shook the house and made Dorcas turn pale as she said to her father :

" Oh, do you suppose it will reach her ?"

" I think not," Mr. Leighton replied ; then turning to Rex, he said, " My youngest daughter, Bertha, is on the sea,—sailed on the Teutonic this morning,—and Dorcas is afraid the storm may reach her."

" Sailed this morning on the Teutonic !" Rex repeated. " So did my aunt, Mrs. Carter Hallam."

" Mrs. Carter Hallam !" and Dorcas set down her cup of tea with such force that some of it was spilled upon the snowy cloth. " Why, that is the name of the lady with whom Bertha has gone as companion."

" It was Rex's turn now to be surprised, and explanations followed.

" I supposed all the Hallams of Leicester were dead, and never thought of associating Mrs. Carter with them," Mr. Leighton said, while Rex in turn explained that as Miss Leighton's letter had been written in Boston and he had addressed her there for his aunt it did not occur to him that her home was here at the Homestead.

" Did you see her on the ship, and was she well ?" Dorcas asked, and he replied that, as he reached the steamer only in time to say good-bye to his aunt, he did not see Miss Leighton, but he knew she was there and presumably well.

" I am sorry now that I did not meet her," he added, looking more closely at Dorcas than he had done before, and trying to trace some resemblance between her and the photograph he had dubbed Squint-Eye.

But there was none, and he felt a good deal puzzled, wondering what Phineas meant by calling Dorcas

"handsome as blazes." She must be the one referred to, for no human being could ever accuse Squint-Eye of any degree of beauty. And yet how the father and sister loved her, and how the old man's voice trembled when he spoke of her, always with pride it seemed to Rex, who began at last himself to feel a good deal of interest in her. He knew now that he was occupying her seat, and that the rose-bud he had fastened in his button-hole was put there for her, and he hoped his aunt would treat her well.

"I mean to write and give her some points, for there's no guessing what Mrs. Walker Haynes may put her up to do," he thought, just as he caught the name of Phineas and heard Mr. Leighton saying to Dorcas:

"I saw him this morning, and he thinks he will get up in the course of a week and do the plastering."

"Not before a week! How provoking!" Dorcas replied, while Rex ventured to say:

"Are you speaking of Phineas Jones? I made his acquaintance this morning, or rather he made mine. Quite a character, isn't he?"

"I should say he was," Dorcas replied, while her father rejoined:

"Everybody knows Phineas, and everybody likes him. He is nobody's enemy but his own, and shiftlessness is his great fault. He can do almost everything, and do it well, too. He'll work a few weeks,—maybe a few months,—and then lie idle, visiting and talking, till he has spent all he earned. He knows everybody's business and history, and will sacrifice everything for his friends. He attends every camp-meeting he can hear of, and is apt to lose his balance and have what he calls the power. He comes here quite often, and is

very handy in fixing up. I've got a little job waiting for him now, where the plastering fell off in the front chamber, and I dare say it will continue to wait. But I like the fellow, and am sorry for him. I don't know that he has a relative in the world."

Rex could have told of his Aunt Lucy, and that through her, Phineas claimed relationship to himself, but concluded not to open up a subject which he knew would be obnoxious to his aunt. Supper was now over, but the rain was still falling heavily, and when Rex asked how far it was to the hotel, both Mr. Leighton and Dorcas invited him so cordially to spend the night with them, that he decided to do so, and then began to wonder how he should broach the real object of his visit. From all Phineas had told him, and from what he had seen of Mr. Leighton, he began to be doubtful of success, but it was worth trying for, and he was ready to offer fifteen hundred dollars extra, if necessary. His coat and shoes were dry by this time, and habited in them he felt more like himself, and after Dorcas had removed her apron, showing that her evening work was done, and had taken her seat near her father, he said :

"By the way, did Mr. Gorham ever write to you that a New Yorker would like to buy your farm ?"

"Yes," Mr. Leighton replied, and Rex continued :

"I am the man, and that is my business here."

"Oh !" and Dorcas moved uneasily in her chair, while her father answered, "I thought so."

Then there was a silence, which Rex finally broke, telling why he wanted that particular farm and what he was willing to give for it, knowing before he finished that he had failed. The farm was not for sale, except under compulsion, which Mr. Leighton hoped might be

avoided, explaining matters so minutely that Rex had a tolerably accurate knowledge of the state of affairs and knew why the daughter had gone abroad as his aunt's companion, in preference to remaining in the employ of Swartz & Co.

"Confound it, if I hadn't insisted upon aunt's offering five hundred instead of three hundred, as she proposed doing, Bertha would not have gone, and I might have got the place," he thought.

Mr. Leighton continued, "I think it would kill me to lose the home where I have lived so long, but if it must be sold, I'd rather you should have it than any one I know, and if worst comes to worst, and anything happens to Bertha, I'll let you know in time to buy it."

He looked so white and his voice shook so as he talked that Rex felt his castles and fox-hunts all crumbling together, and, with his usual impulsiveness, began to wonder if Mr. Leighton would accept aid from him in case of an emergency. It was nearly ten o'clock by this time, and Mr. Leighton said, "I suppose this is early for city folks, but in the country we retire early, and I am tired. We always have prayers at night. Bring the books, daughter, and we'll sing the 267th hymn."

Dorcas did as she was bidden, and, offering a Hymnal to Rex, opened an old-fashioned piano and began to play and sing, accompanied by her father, whose trembling voice quavered along until he reached the words,—

"Oh, hear us when we cry to Thee
For those in peril on the sea."

Then he broke down entirely, while Dorcas soon followed, and Rex was left to finish alone, which he did

without the slightest hesitancy. He had a rich tenor voice; taking up the air where Dorcas dropped it, he sang the hymn to the end, while Mr. Leighton stood with closed eyes and a rapt expression on his face.

"I wish Bertha could hear that. Let us pray," he said, when the song was ended, and, before he quite knew what he was doing, Rex found himself on his knees, listening to Mr. Leighton's fervent prayer, which closed with the petition for the safety of those upon the deep.

As Rex had told Phineas Jones, he was not a professor, and he did not call himself a very religious man. He attended church every Sunday morning with his aunt, went through the services reverently, and listened to the sermon attentively, but not all the splendors of St. Thomas's Church had ever impressed him as did that simple, homely service in the farm-house among the Leicester hills, where his "Amen" to the prayer for those upon the sea was loud and distinct, and included in it not only his aunt and Bertha, but also the girl whom he had knocked down, who seemed to haunt him strangely.

"If I were to have much of this, Phineas would not be obliged to take me to one of his meetings to convert me," he thought, as he arose from his knees and signified his readiness to retire.

CHAPTER IX.

REX MAKES DISCOVERIES.

It was Mr. Leighton who conducted Rex to his sleeping-room, saying, as he put the lamp down upon the dressing-bureau: "There's a big patch of plaster off in the best chamber, where the girls put company, so you are to sleep in here. This is Bertha's room."

Rex became interested immediately. To occupy a young girl's room, even if that girl were Squint-Eye, was a novel experience, and after Mr. Leighton had said good-night he began to look about with a good deal of curiosity. Everything was plain, but neat and dainty, from the pretty matting and soft fur rug on the floor, to the bed which looked like a white pin-cushion, with its snowy counterpane and fluted pillow-shams.

"It is just the room a nice kind of a girl would be apt to have, and it doesn't seem as if a great, hulking fellow like me ought to be in it," he said, fancying he could detect a faint perfume such as he knew some girls affected. "I think, though, it's the roses and lilies. I don't believe Squint-Eye goes in for Lubin and Pinaud and such like," he thought, just as he caught sight of the slippers, which Dorcas had forgotten to remove when she arranged the room for him.

"Halloo! here are Cinderella's shoes, as I live," he said, taking one of them up and handling it gingerly as if afraid he should break it. "French heels; and, by Jove, she's got a small foot, and a well-shaped one, too. I wouldn't have thought that of Squint-Eye," he said,

with a feeling that the girl he called Squint-Eye had no right either in the room or in the slipper, which he put down carefully, and then continued his investigations, coming next to the window-seat, where the work-basket and book were lying. "Embroiders, I see. Wouldn't be a woman if she didn't," he said, as he glanced at the bit of fancy work left in the basket. Then his eye caught the book, which he took up and saw was a volume of Tennyson, which showed a good deal of usage. "Poetical, too! Wouldn't have thought that of her, either. She doesn't look it." Then turning to the fly-leaf, he read, "Bertha Leighton. From her cousin Louie. Christmas, 18—."

"By George," he exclaimed, "that is Louie Thurston's handwriting. Not quite as scrawly as it was when we wrote the girl and boy letters to each other, but the counterpart of the note she sent me last summer in Saratoga, asking me to ride with her and Fred. And she calls herself cousin to this Bertha! I remember now she once told me she had some relatives North. They must be these Leightons, and I have come here to find them and aunt's companion too. Truly the world is very small. Poor little Louie! I don't believe she is happy. No woman could be that with Fred, if he *is* my friend. Poor little Louie!"

There was a world of pathos and pity in Rex's voice as he said, "Poor little Louie!" and stood looking at her handwriting and thinking of the beautiful girl whom he might perhaps have won for his own. But if any regret for what might have been mingled with his thoughts, he gave no sign of it, except that the expression of his face was a shade more serious as he put the book back in its place and prepared for bed, where he

lay awake a long time, thinking of Louie, and Squint-Eye, and the girl he had knocked down on the ship, and Rose Arabella Jefferson, whose face was the last he remembered before going to sleep.

The next morning was bright and fair, with no trace of the storm visible except in the freshened foliage and the puddles of water standing here and there in the road, and Rex, as he looked from his window upon the green hills and valleys, felt a pang of disappointment that the place he so coveted could never be his. Breakfast was waiting when he went down to the dining-room, and while at the table he spoke of Louie and asked if she were not a cousin.

"Oh, yes," Dorcas said, quickly, a little proud of this grand relation. "Louie's mother and ours were sisters. She told Bertha she knew you. Isn't she lovely?"

Rex said she was lovely, and that he had known her since she was a child, and had been in college with her husband. Then he changed the conversation by inquiring about the livery-stables in town. He would like, he said, to drive about the neighborhood a little before returning to New York, and see the old cemetery where so many Hallams were buried.

"Horses enough, but you've got to walk into town to get them. If old Bush will answer your purpose you are quite welcome to him," Mr. Leighton said.

"Thanks," Rex replied. "I am already indebted to you for so much that I may as well be indebted for more. I will take old Bush, and perhaps Miss Leighton will go with me as a guide."

This Dorcas was quite willing to do, and the two were soon driving together through the leafy woods and pleasant roads and past the old houses, where the

people came to the doors and windows to see what fine gentleman Dorcas Leighton had with her. Every one whom they met spoke to Dorcas and inquired for Bertha, in whom all seemed greatly interested.

"Your sister must be very popular. This is the thirteenth person who has stopped you to ask for her," Rex said, as an old Scotchman finished his inquiries by saying, "She's a bonnie lassie, God bless her."

"She is popular, and deservedly so. I wish you knew her," was Dorcas's reply; and then as a conviction, born he knew not when or why, kept increasing in Rex's mind, he asked, "Would you mind telling me how she looks? Is she dark or fair? tall or short? fat or lean?

Dorcas answered unhesitatingly, "She is very beautiful,—neither fat nor lean, tall nor short, dark nor fair, but just right."

"Oh-h!" and Rex drew a long breath as Dorcas went on: "She has a lovely complexion, with brilliant color, perfect features, reddish-brown hair with glints of gold in it in the sunlight, and the handsomest eyes you ever saw,—large and bright and almost black at times when she is excited or pleased,—long lashes, and carries herself like a queen."

"Oh-h!" Rex said again, knowing that Rose Arabella Jefferson had fallen from her pedestal of beauty and was really the Squint-Eye of whom he had thought so derisively. "Have you a photograph of her?" he asked, and Dorcas replied that she had and would show it to him if he liked.

They had now reached home, and, bringing out an old and well-filled album, Dorcas pointed to a photograph which Rex recognized as a facsimile of the one his aunt

had insisted belonged to Miss Jefferson. He could not account for the peculiar sensations which swept over him and kept deepening in intensity as he looked at the face which attracted him more now than when he believed it that of Rose Arabella of Scotsburg.

"I wish you would let me have this. I am a regular photo-fiend,—have a stack of them at home, and would like mightily to add this to the lot," he said, remembering that the one he had was defaced with Rose Arabella's name.

But Dorcas declined. "Bertha would not like it," she said, taking the album from him quickly, as if she read his thoughts and feared lest he would take the picture whether she were willing or not.

It was now time for Rex to go, if he would catch the next car for Worcester. After thanking Mr. Leighton and Dorcas for their hospitality and telling them to be sure and let him know whenever they came to New York, so that he might return their kindness, he bade them good-bye, with a feeling that although he had lost his fancy farm and fox hunts, he had gained two valuable friends.

"They are about the nicest people I ever met," he said, as he walked down the avenue. "Couldn't have done more if I had been related. I ought to have told them to come straight to our house if they were ever in New York, and I would if it were mine. But Aunt Lucy wouldn't like it. I wonder she didn't tell me about the mistake in the photographs when I was on the ship. Maybe she didn't think of it, I saw her so short a time. I remember, though, that she did say that Miss Leighton was rather too high and mighty, and, by George, I told her to sit down on her! I *have*

made a mess of it ; but I will write at once and go over sooner than I intended, for there is no telling what Mrs. Haynes may put my aunt up to do. I will not have that girl snubbed ; and if I find them at it, I'll ——"

Here he gave an energetic flourish of his cane in the air to attract the conductor of the fast-coming car, and posterity will never know what he intended doing to his aunt and Mrs. Walker Haynes, if he found them snubbing that girl.

CHAPTER X.

AT AIX-LES-BAINS.

THERE was a stop of a few days at the Metropole in London, where Mrs. Hallam engaged a courier ; there was another stop at the Grand in Paris, where a ladies' maid was secured ; and, thus equipped, Mrs. Hallam felt that she was indeed traveling *en prince* as she journeyed on to Aix, where Mrs. Walker Haynes met her at the station with a very handsome turnout, which was afterwards included in Mrs Hallam's bill.

"I knew you would not care to go in the 'bus with your servants, so I ventured to order the carriage for you," she said, as they wound up the steep hill to the Hôtel Splendide.

Then she told what she had done for her friend's comfort and the pleasure it had been to do it, notwithstanding all the trouble and annoyance she had been

subjected to. The season was at its height, and all the hotels were crowded, especially the Splendide. A grande duchesse with her suite occupied the guest-rooms on the first floor ; the King of Greece had all the second floor south of the main entrance ; while English, Jews, Spaniards, Greeks, and Russians had the rooms at the other end of the hall ; consequently Mrs. Hallam must be content with the third floor, where a salon and a bedchamber, with balcony attached, had been reserved for her. She had found the most trouble with the salon, she said, as a French countess was determined to have it, and she had secured it only by engaging it at once two weeks ago and promising more per day than the countess was willing to give for it. As it had to be paid for whether occupied or not, she had taken the liberty to use it herself, knowing her friend would not care. Mrs. Hallam didn't care, even when later on she found that the salon had been accredited to her since she first wrote to Mrs. Haynes that she was coming and asked her to secure rooms. She was accustomed to being fleeced by Mrs. Haynes, whom Rex called a second Becky Sharp. The salon business being settled, Mrs. Haynes ventured farther and said that as she had been obliged to dismiss her maid and had had so much trouble to fill her place she had finally decided to wait until her friend came, when possibly the services of one maid would answer for both ladies.

"Gracie prefers to wait upon herself," she continued, "but I find it convenient at times to have some one do my hair and lay out my dresses and go with me to the baths, which I take about ten ; you, no doubt, who have plenty of money, will go down early in one of those covered chairs which two men bring to your room.

It is a most comfortable way of doing, as you are wrapped in a blanket quite *en déshabille* and put into a chair, the curtains are dropped, and you are taken to the bath and back in time for your first *déjeûner*, and are all through with the baths early and can enjoy yourself the rest of the day. It is rather expensive, of course, and I cannot afford it, but all who can, do. The Scrantoms from New York, the Montgomerys from Boston, the Harwoods from London, and old Lady Gresham, all go down that way; quite a high-toned procession, which some impertinent American girls try to kodak. I shall introduce you to these people. They know you are coming, and you are sure to like them."

Mrs. Haynes knew just what chord to touch with her ambitious friend, who was as clay in her hands. By the time the hotel was reached it had been arranged that she was not only to continue to use the salon, but was also welcome to the services of Mrs. Hallam's maid, Celine, and her courier, Browne, and possibly her companion, although on this point she was doubtful, as the girl had a mind of her own and was not easily managed.

"I saw that in her face the moment I looked at her, and thought she might give you trouble. She really looked as if she expected me to speak to her. Who is she?" Mrs. Haynes asked, and very briefly Mrs. Hallam told all she knew of her,—of the mistake in the photographs, of Reginald's admiration of the one which was really Bertha's, and of his encounter with her on the ship.

"Hm; yes," Mrs. Walker rejoined, reflectively, and in an instant her tactics were resolved upon.

Possessed of a large amount of worldly wisdom and

foresight, she boasted that she could read the end from the beginning, and on this occasion her quick instincts told her that, given a chance, this hired companion might come between her and her plan of marrying her daughter Grace to Rex Hallam, who was every way desirable as a son-in-law. She had seen enough of him to know that if he cared for a girl it would make no difference whether she were a wage-earner or the daughter of a duke, and Bertha might prove a formidable rival. He had admired her photograph and been kind to her on the boat, and when he met her again there was no knowing what complications might arise if, as was most probable, Bertha herself were artful and ambitious. And so, for no reason whatever except her own petty jealousy, she conceived a most unreasonable dislike for the girl ; and when Mrs. Haynes was unreasonable she sometimes was guilty of acts of which she was afterwards ashamed.

Arrived at the hotel, which the 'bus had reached before her, she said to Bertha, who was standing near the door, "Take your mistress's bag and shawl up to the third floor, No. —, and wait there for us."

Bertha knew it was Celine's place to do this, but that demoiselle, who thus far had not proved the treasure she was represented to be, had found an acquaintance, to whom she was talking so volubly that she did not observe the entrance of her party until Bertha was halfway up the three flights of stairs, with Mrs. Hallam's bag and wrap as well as her own. The service at the Splendide was not the best, and those who would wait upon themselves were welcome to do so, and Bertha toiled on with her arms full, while Mrs. Hallam and Mrs.

Haynes took the little coop of a lift and ascended very leisurely.

"This is your room. I hope you will like it," Mrs. Haynes said, stopping at the open door of a large, airy room, with a broad window opening upon a balcony, where a comfortable easy-chair was standing. Mrs. Hallam sank into it at once, admiring the view and pleased with everything. The clerk at the office had handed her a letter which had come in the morning mail. It was from Rex, and was full of his visit to the Homestead, the kindness he had received from Mr. Leighton and Dorcas, and the discovery he had made with regard to Bertha.

"I wonder you didn't tell me on the ship that I was right and you wrong," he wrote. "You did say, though, that she was high and mighty, and I told you to sit on her. But don't you do it! She is a lady by birth and education, and I want you to treat her kindly and not let Mrs. Haynes bamboozle you into snubbing her because she is your companion. I sha'n't like it if you do, for it will be an insult to the Leightons and a shame to us." Then he added, "At the hotel in Worcester I fell in with a fellow who claimed to be a fortieth cousin of yours, Phineas Jones. Do you remember him? Great character. Called you cousin Lucy Ann,—said you spelled him down at a spelling-match on the word 'dammed,' and that he was going to call when you got home. I didn't give him our address."

After reading this the view from the balcony did not look so charming or the sunlight so bright, and there was a shadow on Mrs. Hallam's face caused not so much by what Rex had written of the Homestead as by his encounter with Phineas Jones, her abomination. Why

had he, of all possible persons, turned up? And what else had he told Rex of her besides the spelling episode? Everything, probably, and more than everything, for she remembered well Phineas's loquacity, which sometimes carried him into fiction. And he talked of calling upon her, too! "The wretch!" she said, crushing the letter in her hands, as she would have liked to crush the offending Phineas.

"No bad news, I hope?" Mrs. Haynes said, stepping upon the balcony and noting the change in her friend's expression.

Mrs. Hallam, who would have died sooner than tell of Phineas Jones, answered, "Oh, no. Rex has been to the Homestead and found out about Bertha, over whom he is wilder than ever, saying I must be kind to her and all that; as if I would be anything else."

"Hm; yes," Mrs. Haynes replied, an expression which always meant a great deal with her, and which in this case meant a greater dislike to Bertha and a firmer resolve to humiliate her.

It was beginning to grow dark by this time. Re-entering her room, Mrs. Hallam asked, "Where is Celine? I want her to open my trunk and get out a cooler dress; this is so hot and dusty."

But Celine was not forthcoming, and Bertha was summoned in her place. At the Metropole Bertha had occupied a stuffy little room looking into a court, while at the Grand in Paris she had slept in what she called a closet, so that now she felt as if in Paradise when she took possession of her room, which, if small and at the rear, looked out upon grass and flowers and the tall hills which encircle Aix on all sides.

"This is delightful," she thought, as she leaned from

the window inhaling the perfume of the flowers and drinking in the sweet, pure air which swept down the green hill-side, where vines and fruits were growing. She, too, had found a letter waiting for her from Dorcas, who detailed every particular of Reginald's visit to the Homestead, and dwelt at some length upon his evident admiration of Bertha's photograph and his desire to have it.

"I don't pretend to have your psychological presentiments," Dorcas wrote, "but if I had I should say that Mr. Hallam would admire you when he sees you quite as much as he did your picture, and I know you will like him. You cannot help it. He will join you before long."

Bertha knew better than Dorcas that she should like Rex Hallam, and something told her that her life after he came would be different from what it was now. For Mrs. Hallam she had but little respect, she was so thoroughly selfish and exacting, but she did not dislike her with the dislike she had conceived in a moment for Mrs. Haynes, in whom she had intuitively recognized a foe, who would tyrannize over and humiliate her worse than her employer. During her climb upstairs she had resolved upon her course of conduct towards the lady should she attempt to browbeat her.

"I will do my best to please Mrs. Hallam, but I will not be subject to that woman," she thought, just as some one knocked, and in response to her "Come in," Mrs. Haynes appeared, saying, "Leighton, Mrs. Hallam wants you."

"Madam, if you are speaking to me, I am *Miss Leighton*," Bertha said, while her eyes flashed so angrily that for a moment Mrs. Haynes lost her self command and

stammered an apology, saying she was so accustomed to hearing the English employees called by their last names that she had inadvertently acquired the habit.

There was a haughty inclination of Bertha's head in token that she accepted the apology, and then the two, between whom there was now war, went to Mrs. Hallam's room, where Bertha unlocked a trunk and took out a fresher dress. While she was doing this, Mrs. Hallam again stepped out upon the balcony with Mrs. Haynes, who said:

"It is too late for *table-d'hôte*, but I have ordered a nice little extra dinner for you and me, to be served in our salon. I thought you'd like it better there the first night. Grace has dined and gone to the Casino with a party of English, who have rooms under us. The king is to be there."

"Do you know him well?" Mrs. Hallam asked, pleased at the possibility of hobnobbing with royalty.

"Ye-es—no-o. Well, he has bowed to me, but I have not exactly spoken to him yet," was Mrs. Haynes's reply, and then she went on hurriedly, "I have engaged seats for lunch and dinner for you, Grace and myself in the *salle-à-manger*, near Lady Gresham's party, and also a small table in a corner of the breakfast-room where we can be quite private and take our coffee together, when you do not care to have it in your salon. Grace insists upon going down in the morning, and of course, I must go with her."

"You are very kind," Mrs. Hallam said, thinking how nice it was to have all care taken from her, while Mrs. Haynes continued:

"Your servants take their meals in the servants' hall. Celine will naturally prefer to sit with her own

people, and if you like I will arrange to have places reserved with the English for your courier and—and ——"

She hesitated a little, until Mrs. Hallam said, in some surprise :

"Do you mean Miss Leighton ?"

Then she went on. "Yes, the courier and Miss Leighton ; he seems a very respectable man,—quite superior to his class."

Here was a turn in affairs for which even Mrs. Hallam was not prepared. Heretofore Bertha had taken her meals with her, nor had she thought of a change ; but if Mrs. Walker Haynes saw fit to make one, it must be right. Still, there was Rex to be considered. Would he think this was treating Bertha as she should be treated ? She was afraid not, and she said, hesitatingly, "Yes, but I am not sure Reginald would like it."

"What has he to do with it, pray ?" Mrs. Haynes asked, quickly.

Mrs. Hallam replied, "Her family was very nice to him, and you know he wrote me to treat her kindly. I don't think he would like to find her in the servants' hall."

This was the first sign of rebellion Mrs. Haynes had ever seen in her friend, and she met it promptly.

"I do not see how you can do differently, if you adhere to the customs of those with whom you wish to associate. Several English families have had companions, or governesses, or seamstresses, or something, and they have always gone to the servants' hall. Lady Gresham has one there now. Miss Leighton may be all Reginald thinks she is, but if she puts herself in the position of an employee she must expect an employee's fare, and not thrust herself upon first-class people.

You will only pay second-class for her if she goes there."

Lady Gresham and the English and paying second-class were influencing Mrs. Hallam mightily, but a dread of Rex, who when roused in the cause of oppression would not be pleasant to meet, kept her hesitating, until Bertha herself settled the matter. She had heard the conversation, although it had been carried on in low tones and sometimes in whispers. At first she resolved that rather than submit to this indignity she would give up her position and go home; then, remembering what Mrs. Hallam had said of Reginald, who was sure to be angry if he found her thus humiliated, she began to change her mind.

"I'll do it," she thought, while the absurdity of the thing grew upon her so fast that it began at last to look like a huge joke which she might perhaps enjoy. Going to the door, she said, while a proud smile played over her face, "Ladies, I could not help hearing what you said, and as Mrs. Hallam seems undecided in the matter I will decide for her, and go to the servants' hall, which I prefer. I have tried first-class people, and would like a chance to try the second."

She looked like a young queen as she stood in the doorway, her eyes sparkling and her cheeks glowing with excitement, and Mrs. Haynes felt that for once she had met a foe worthy of her.

"Yes, that will be best, and I dare say you will find it very comfortable," Mrs. Hallam said, admiring the girl as she had never admired her before, and thinking that before Rex came she would manage to make a change.

That night, however, she had Bertha's dinner sent to

her room, and also made arrangements to have her coffee served there in the morning, so it was not until lunch that she had her first experience as second-class. The hall, which was not used for the servants of the house, who had their meals elsewhere, was a long room on the ground-floor, and there she found assembled a mixed company of nurses, maids, couriers, and valets, all talking together in a babel of tongues, English, French, German, Italian, Russian, and Greek, and all so earnest that they did not see the graceful young woman who, with a heightened color and eyes which shone like stars as they took in the scene, walked to the only vacant seat she saw, which was evidently intended for her, as it was next the courier Browne. But when they did see her they became as silent as if the king himself had come into their midst, while Browne rose to his feet, and with a respectful bow held her chair for her until she was seated, and then asked what he should order for her. Browne, who was a respectable middle-aged man and had traveled extensively with both English and Americans, had seen that Bertha was superior to her employer, and had shown her many little attentions in a respectful way. He had heard from Celine that she was coming to the second salon, and resented it more, if possible, than Bertha herself, resolving to constitute himself her protector and shield her from every possible annoyance. This she saw at once, and smiled gratefully upon him. No one spoke to her, and silence reigned as she finished her lunch and then left the room with a bow in which all felt they were included.

"By Jove, Browne, who is that person, and how came she here? She looks like a lady," asked an English valet, while two or three Frenchmen nearly lost their

balance with their fierce gesticulations, as they clamored to know who the grande mademoiselle was.

Striking his fist upon the table to enforce silence, Browne said :

"She is a Miss Leighton, from America, and far more a lady than many of the bediamonded and besatined trash above us. She is in my party as madam's companion, and whoever is guilty of the least impertinence towards her in word or look will answer for it to me ; to *me*, do you understand ?" And he turned fiercely towards a wicked-looking little Frenchman, whose bad eyes had rested too boldly and too admiringly upon the girl.

Mon Dieu, oui, oui, oui !" the man replied, and then in broken English asked, "Why comes she here, if she be a lady ?"

It was Celine who answered for Browne :

"Because her mistress is a cat, a nasty old cat,—as the English say. And there is a pair of them. I heard them last night saying she must be put down, and they have put her down here. I hate them, and mine most of all. She tries to get me cheap. She keeps me fly-fly. She gives me no *pourboires*. She sleeps me in a dog-kennel. Bah ! I stay not, if good chance come. *L'Amèricaine* hundred times more lady."

This voluble speech, which was interpreted by one to another until all had a tolerably correct idea of it, did not diminish the interest in Bertha, to whom after this every possible respect was paid, the men always rising with Browne when she entered the dining-hall and remaining standing until she was seated. Bertha was human, and such homage could not help pleasing her, although it came from those whose language she could

not understand, and who by birth and education were greatly her inferiors. It was something to be the object of so much respect, and when, warmed by the bright smile she always gave them, the Greeks, and the Russians, and the Italians, not only rose when she entered the hall, but also when she passed them outside, if they chanced to be sitting, she felt that her life had some compensations, if it were one of drudgery and menial service.

True to her threat, Celine left when a more desirable situation offered, and Mrs. Hallam did not fill her place. "No need of it, so long as you have Miss Leighton and pay her what you do," Mrs. Haynes said; and so it came about that Bertha found herself companion in name only and waiting-maid in earnest, walking demurely by the covered chair which each morning took Mrs. Hallam to her bath, combing that lady's hair, mending and brushing her clothes, carrying messages, doing far more than Celine had done, and doing it so uncomplainingly that both Mrs. Hallam and Mrs. Haynes wondered at her. At last, however, when asked to accompany Mrs. Haynes to the bath, she rebelled. To serve her in that way was impossible, and she answered civilly, but decidedly, "No, Mrs. Hallam. I have done and will do whatever you require for yourself, but for Mrs. Haynes, nothing. She never spares an opportunity to humiliate me. I will not attend her to her bath. I will give up my place first." That settled it, and Bertha was never again asked to wait upon Mrs. Haynes.

CHAPTER XI.

GRACE HAYNES.

"BRAVO, Miss Leighton! I did not suppose there was so much spirit in you, when I saw you darning madam's stockings and buttoning her boots. You are a brick and positively I admire you. Neither mamma nor Mrs Hallam needs any one to go with them, any more than the sea needs water. But it is English, you know, to have an attendant, and such an attendant, too, as you. Yes, I admire you! I respect you! Our door was open, and I heard what you said; so did mamma, and she is furious; but I am glad to see one woman assert her rights."

It was Grace Haynes, who, coming from her bedroom, joined Bertha, as she was walking rapidly down the hall and said all this to her. Bertha had been nearly two weeks at Aix, and, although she had scarcely exchanged a word with Grace, she had often seen her, and remembering what Mrs. Hallam had said of her and Reginald, had looked at her rather critically. She was very thin and wiry, with a pale face, yellow hair worn short, large blue eyes, and a nose inclined to an upward curve. She was a kind-hearted, good-natured girl, of a pronounced type both in dress and manner and speech. She believed in a little slang, she said, because it gave a point to conversation, and she adored baccarat and rouge-et-noir, and a lot more things which her mother thought highly improper. She had heard all that her mother said of Bertha, and, quick to discriminate, she

had seen how infinitely superior she was to Mrs. Hallam and had felt drawn to her, but was too much absorbed in her own matters to have any time for a stranger. She was a natural flirt, and, although so plain, always managed to have, as she said, two or three idiots dangling on her string. Just now it was a young Englishman, the grandson of old Lady Gresham, whom she had upon her string, greatly to the disgust of her mother, with whom she was not often in perfect accord.

Linking her arm in Bertha's as they went down the stairs, she continued, "Are you going to walk? I am, up the hill. Come with me. I've been dying to talk to you ever since you came, but have been so engaged, and you are always so busy with madam since Celine went away. Good pious work you must find it waiting on madam and mamma both! I don't see how you do it so sweetly. You must have a great deal of what they call inward and spiritual grace. I wish you'd give me some."

Grace was the first girl of her own age and nation who had spoken to Bertha since she left America, and she responded readily to the friendly advance.

"I don't believe I have any inward and spiritual grace to spare," she said. "I only do what I hired out to do. You know I must earn my wages."

"Yes," Grace answered, "I know, and I wish I could earn wages, too. It would be infinitely more respectable than the way we get our money."

"How do you get it?" Bertha asked, and Grace replied, "Don't you know? You have certainly heard of high-born English dames who, for a consideration, undertake to hoist ambitious Americans into society?"

Bertha had heard of such things, and Grace con-

tinued, "Well, that is what mamma does at home on a smaller scale; and she succeeds, too. Everybody knows Mrs. Walker Haynes, with blood so blue that indigo is pale beside it, and if she pulls a string for a puppet to dance, all the other puppets dance in unison. Sometimes she chaperons a party of young ladies, but as these give her a good deal of trouble, she prefers people like Mrs. Hallam, who without her would never get into society. Society! I hate the word, with all it involves. Do you see that colt over there?" and she pointed to a young horse in an adjoining field. "Well, I am like that colt, kicking up its heels in a perfect abandon of freedom. But harness it to a cart, with thills and lines and straps and reins, and then apply the whip, won't it rebel with all its might? And if it gets its feet over the traces and breaks in the dash-board who can blame it? I'm just like that colt. I hate that old go-giggle called society, which says you mustn't do this and you must do that because it is or is not proper and Mrs. Grundy would be shocked. I like to shock her, and I'd rather take boarders than live as we do now. I'd do anything to earn money. That's why I play at baccarat."

"Baccarat!" Bertha repeated, with a little start.

"Yes, baccarat. Don't try to pull away from me. I felt you," Grace said, holding Bertha closer by the arm. "You are Massachusetts born and have a lot of Massachusetts notions, of course, and I respect you for it, but I am Bohemian through and through. Wasn't born anywhere in particular, and have been in your so-called first society all my life and detest it. We have a little income, and could live in the country with one servant comfortably, as so many people do; but that would not

suit mamma, and so we go from pillar to post and live on other people, until I am ashamed. I am successful at baccarat. They say the old gent who tempted Eve helps new beginners at cards, and I believe he helps me, I win so often. I know it isn't good form, but what can I do? If I don't play baccarat there's nothing left for me but to marry, and that I never shall."

"Why not?" Bertha asked, becoming more and more interested in the strange girl talking so confidentially to her.

"Why not?" Grace repeated. "That shows that you are not in it,—the swim, I mean. Don't you know that few young men nowadays can afford to marry a poor girl and support her in her extravagance and laziness? She must have money to get any kind of a show, and that I haven't,—nor beauty either, like you, whose face is worth a fortune. Don't say it isn't; don't fib," she continued, as Bertha tried to speak. "You know you are beautiful, with a grande-duchesse air which makes everybody turn to look at you, even the king. I saw him, and I've seen those Russians and Greeks, who are here with some high cockalorums, take off their hats when you came near them. Celine told me how they all stand up when you enter the *salle-à-manger*. I call that genuine homage, which I'd give a good deal to have."

She had let go Bertha's arm and was walking a little in advance, when she stopped suddenly, and, turning round, said, "I wonder what you will think of Rex Hallam."

Bertha made no reply, and she went on: "I know I am talking queerly, but I must let myself out to some one. Rex is coming before long, and you will know then, if you don't now, that mamma is moving heaven

and earth to make a match between us ; but she never will. I am not his style, and he is far more likely to marry you than me. I have known him for years, and could get up a real liking for him if it would be of any use, but it wouldn't. He doesn't want a washed-out, yellow-haired girl like me. Nobody does, unless it's Jack Travis, old Lady Gresham's grandson, with no prospects and only a hundred pounds a year and an orange grove in Florida, which he never saw, and which yields nothing, for want of proper attention. He says he would like to go out there and rough it ; that he does not like being tied to his grandmother's apron-strings ; and that, give him a chance, he would gladly work. I have two hundred dollars a year more. Do you think we could live on that and the climate ?"

They had been retracing their steps, and were near the hotel, where they met the young Englishman in question, evidently looking for Miss Haynes. He was a shambling, loose-jointed young man, but he had a good face, and there was a ring in his voice which Bertha liked, as he spoke first to Grace and then to herself, as Grace presented him to her. Knowing that as a third party she was in the way, Bertha left them and went into the hotel, while they went down into the town, where they stayed so long that Lady Gresham and Mrs. Haynes began to get anxious as to their whereabouts. Both ladies knew of the intimacy between the young people, and both heartily disapproved of it. Under some circumstances Mrs. Haynes would have been delighted to have for a son-in-law Lady Gresham's grandson. But she prized money more than a title, and one hundred pounds a year with a doubtful orange grove in Florida did not commend themselves to her, while Lady

Gresham, although very gracious to Mrs. Haynes, because it was not in her nature to be otherwise to any one, did not like the fast American girl, who wore her hair short, carried her hands in her pockets like a man, and believed in women's rights. If Jack were insane enough to marry her she would wash her hands of him and send him off to that orange grove, where she had heard there was a little dilapidated house in which he could try to live on the climate and one hundred a year. Some such thoughts as these were passing through Lady Gresham's mind, while Mrs. Haynes was thinking of Grace's perversity in encouraging young Travis, and of Reginald Hallam, from whom Mrs. Hallam had that morning had a letter and who was coming to Aix earlier than he had intended doing. Nearly all his friends were out of town, he wrote, and the house was so lonely without his aunt that she might expeet him within two or three weeks at the farthest. He did not say what steamer he should take, but, as ten days had elapsed since his letter was written, Mrs. Hallam said she should not be surprised to see him at any time, and her face wore an air of pleased expectancy at the prospect of having Rex with her once more. But a thought of Bertha brought a cloud upon it at once. She had intended removing her from the second-class *salle-à-manger* before Rex came, but did not know how to manage it.

"The girl seems contented enough," she thought, "and I hear has a great deal of attention there,—in fact, is quite like a queen among her subjects; so I guess I'll let it run, and if Rex flares up I'll trust Mrs. Haynes to help me out of it, as she got me into it."

CHAPTER XII.

THE NIGHT OF THE OPERA.

It was getting rather dull at the Hôtel Splendide. The novelty of having a king in their midst, who went about unattended in citizen's dress, and bowed to all who looked as if they wished him to bow to them, was wearing off, and he could go in and out as often as he liked without being followed or stared at. The grand duchess, too, whose apartments were screened from the great unwashed, had had her Sunday dinner-party, with scions of French royalty in the Bourbon line for her guests. and a band of music outside. The woman from Chicago, who had flirted so outrageously with her eyes with the Russian, while his little wife sat by smiling placidly and suspecting no evil because the Chicagoan professed to speak no language but English, of which her husband did not understand a word, had departed for other fields. The French count, who had beaten his American bride of three weeks' standing, had also gone, and the hotel had subsided into a state of great respectability and circumspection.

"Positively we are stagnating, with nothing to gossip about except Jack and myself, and nothing going on in town," Grace Haynes said to Bertha, with whom she continued on the most friendly terms.

But the stagnation came to an end and the town woke up when it was known that Miss Sanderson from San Francisco was to appear in opera at the Casino. Everybody had heard of the young prima donna, and

all were anxious to see her. Mrs. Hallam took a box for Mrs. Haynes, Grace, and herself, but, although there was plenty of room, Bertha was not included in the party. Nearly all the guests were going from the third floor, which would thus be left entirely to the servants, and Mrs. Hallam, who was always suspecting foreigners of pilfering from her, did not dare leave her rooms alone, so Bertha must stay and watch them. She had done this before when Mrs. Hallam was at the Casino, but to-night it seemed particularly hard, as she wished to see Miss Sanderson so much that she would willingly have stood in the rear seats near the door, where a crowd always congregated. But there was no help for it, and after seeing Mrs. Hallam and her party off she went into the salon, and, taking an easy-chair and a book, sat down to enjoy the quiet and the rest. She was very tired, for Mrs. Hallam had kept her unusually busy that day, arranging the dress she was going to wear, and sending her twice down the long, steep hill into the town in quest of something needed for her toilet. It was very still in and around the hotel, and at last, overcome by fatigue and drowsiness, Bertha's book dropped into her lap and she fell asleep with her head thrown back against the cushioned chair and one hand resting on its arm. Had she tried she could not have chosen a more graceful position, or one which showed her face and figure to better advantage, and so thought Rex Hallam, when, fifteen or twenty minutes later, he stepped into the room and stood looking at her.

Ever since his visit to the Homestead he had found his thoughts constantly turning to Aix-les-Bains, and had made up his mind to go on a certain ship, when he accidentally met Fred Thurston, who was stopping in New

York for two or three days before sailing. There was an invitation to dinner at the Windsor, and as a result Rex packed his trunk, and, securing a vacant berth, sailed for Havre with the Thurstons a week earlier than he had expected to sail. Fred was sick all the voyage and kept his berth, but Louie seemed perfectly well, and had never been so happy since she was a child playing with Rex under the magnolias in Florida as she was now, walking and talking with him upon the deck, where, with her piquant, childish beauty, she attracted a great deal of attention and provoked some comment from the censorious when it was known that she had a husband sick in his berth. But Louie was guiltless of any intentional wrong-doing. She had said to Bertha in Boston, that she believed Fred was going to die, he was so good; and, with a few exceptions, when the Hyde nature was in the ascendant, he had kept good ever since. He had urged Rex's going with them quite as strongly as Louie, and when he found himself unable to stay on deck, he had bidden Louie go and enjoy herself, saying, however:

"I know what a flirt you are, but I can trust Rex Hallam, on whom your doll beauty has never made an impression and never will; so go and be happy with him."

This was not a pleasant thing to say, but it was like Fred Thurston to say it, and he looked curiously at Louie to see how it would affect her. There was a flush on her face for a moment, while the tears sprang to her eyes. But she was of too sunny a disposition to be miserable long, and, thinking to herself, "Just for this one week I will be happy," she tied on her pretty sea-cloak and hood, and went on deck, and was happy as a

child when something it has lost and mourned is found again. At Paris they separated, the Thurstons going on to Switzerland, and Rex to Aix-les-Bains, laden with messages of love to Bertha, who had been the principal subject of Louie's talk during the voyage. In a burst of confidence Rex had told her of Rose Arabella Jefferson's photograph, and Louie had laughed merrily over the mistake, saying :

" You will find Bertha handsomer than her picture. I think you will fall in love with her ; and—if—you—do ——" she spoke the last words very slowly, while shadow after shadow flitted over her face as if she were fighting some battle with herself ; then, with a bright smile, she added, " I shall be glad."

Rex's journey from Paris to Aix was accomplished without any worse mishap than a detention of the train for three hours or more, so that it was not until his aunt had been gone some time that he reached the hotel, where he was told that Mrs. Hallam and party were at the Casino.

" I suppose she has a salon. I will go there and wait till she returns," Rex said, and then followed a servant up-stairs and along the hall in the direction of the salon.

He had expected to find it locked, and was rather surprised when he saw the open door and the light inside, and still more surprised as he entered the room to find a young lady so fast asleep that his coming did not disturb her. He readily guessed who she was, and for a moment stood looking at her admiringly, noting every point of beauty from the long lashes shading her cheeks to the white hand resting upon the arm of the chair.

" Phineas was right. She is handsome as blazes, but

I don't think it is quite the thing for me to stand staring at her this way. It is taking an unfair advantage of her. I must present myself properly," he thought, and, stepping into the hall, he knocked rather loudly upon the door.

Bertha awoke with a start and sprang to her feet in some alarm as, in response to her "Entrez," a tall young man stepped into the room and stood confronting her with a good deal of assurance.

"You must have made a mistake, sir. This is Mrs. Hallam's salon," she said, rather haughtily, while Rex replied:

"Yes, I know it. Mrs. Hallam is my aunt, and you must be Miss Leighton."

"Oh!" Bertha exclaimed, her attitude changing at once, as she recognized the stranger. "Your aunt is expecting you, but not quite so soon. She will be very sorry not to have been here to meet you. She has gone to the opera. Miss Sanderson is in town."

"So they told me at the office," Rex said, explaining that he had crossed a little sooner than he had intended, but did not telegraph his aunt, as he wished to surprise her. He then added, "I am too late for dinner, but I suppose I can have my supper up here, which will be better than climbing the three flights of stairs again. That scoop of an elevator has gone ashore for repairs, and I had to walk up."

Ringing the bell, he ordered his supper, while Bertha started to leave the salon, saying she hoped he would make himself comfortable until his aunt returned.

"Don't go," he said, stepping between her and the door to detain her. "Stay and keep me company. I have been shut up in a close railway carriage all day

with French and Germans, and am dying to talk to some one who speaks English."

He made her sit down in the chair from which she had risen when he came in, and, drawing another near to her, said, "You do not seem like a stranger, but rather like an old acquaintance. Why, for a whole week I have heard of little else but you."

"Of me!" Bertha said, in surprise.

He replied, "I crossed with Mr. and Mrs. Fred Thurston. She, I believe, is your cousin, and was never tired of talking of you, and has sent more love to you than one man ought to carry for some one else."

"Cousin Louie! Yes, I knew she was coming about this time. And you crossed with her?" Bertha said, thinking what a fine-looking man he was, while there came to her mind what Louie had said of his graciousness of manner, which made every woman think she was especially pleasing to him, whether she were old or young, pretty or plain, rich or poor. He talked so easily and pleasantly and familiarly that it was difficult to think of him as a stranger, and she was not sorry that he had bidden her stay.

When supper was on the table he looked it over a moment, and then said to the waiter, "Bring dishes and napkins enough for two;" then to Bertha, "If I remember the *table d'hôtes* abroad, they are not of a nature to make one refuse supper at ten o'clock; so I hope you are ready to join me."

Bertha had been treated as second-class so long that she had almost come to believe she *was* second-class, and the idea of sitting down to supper with Rex Hallam in his aunt's salon took her breath away.

"Don't refuse," he continued. "It will be so much

jollier than eating alone, and I want you to pour my coffee."

He brought her a chair, and before she realized what she was doing she found herself sitting opposite him quite *en famille*, and chatting as familiarly as if she had known him all her life. He told her of his visit to the Homestead, his drive with Dorcas, and his meeting with Phineas Jones, over which she laughed merrily, feeling that America was not nearly so far away as it had seemed before he came. When supper was over and the table cleared, he began to talk of books and pictures, finding that as a rule they liked the same authors and admired the same artists.

"By the way," he said, suddenly, "why are you not at the opera with my aunt? Are you not fond of music?"

"Yes, very," Bertha replied, "but some one must stay with the rooms. Mrs. Hallam is afraid to leave them alone."

"Ah, yes. Afraid somebody will steal her diamonds, which she keeps doubly and trebly locked, first in a padded box, then in her trunk, and last in her room. Well, I am glad for my sake that you didn't go. But isn't it rather close up here? Suppose we go down. It's a glorious moonlight night, and there must be a piazza somewhere."

Bertha thought of the broad, vine-wreathed piazza, with its easy-chairs, where it would be delightful to sit with Reginald Hallam, but she must not leave her post, and she said so.

"Oh, I see; another case of the boy on the burning deck," Rex said, laughing. "I suppose you are right; but I never had much patience with that boy. I

shouldn't have stayed till I was blown higher than a kite, but should have run with the first sniff of fire. You think I'd better go down? Not a bit of it; if you stay here, I shall. It can't be long now before they come. Zounds! I beg your pardon. Until I said *they*, I had forgotten to inquire for Mrs. Haynes and Grace. They are well, I suppose, and with my aunt?"

Bertha said they were, and Rex continued:

"Grace and I are great friends. She's a little peculiar,—wants to vote, and all that sort of thing,—but I like her immensely."

Then he talked on indifferent subjects until Mrs. Hallam was heard coming along the hall, panting and talking loudly, and evidently out of humor. The elevator, which Rex said had been drawn off for repairs, was still off, and she had been obliged to walk up the stairs, and didn't like it. Bertha had risen to her feet as soon as she heard her voice, while Rex, too, rose and stood behind her in the shadow, so his aunt did not see him as she entered the room, and, sinking into the nearest chair, said, irritably:

"Hurry and help me off with my things. I'm half dead. Whew! Isn't that lamp smoking? How it smells here! Open another window. The lift is not running, and I had to walk up the stairs."

"I knew it stopped earlier in the evening, but supposed it was running now. I am very sorry," Bertha said, and Mrs. Hallam continued:

"You ought to have found out and been down there to help me up."

"I didn't come any too soon," Rex thought, stepping out from the shadow, and saying, in his cheery voice, "Halloo, auntie! All tuckered out, aren't you, with

those horrible stairs! I tried them, and they took the wind out of me."

"Oh, Rex, Rex!" Mrs. Hallam cried, throwing her arms around the tall young man, who bent over her and returned her caresses, while he explained that he did not telegraph, as he wished to surprise her, and that he had reached the hotel half an hour or so after she left it.

"Why didn't you come at once to the Casino? There was plenty of room in our box, and you must have been so dull here."

Rex replied: "Not at all dull, with Miss Leighton for company. I ordered my supper up here and had her join me. So you see I have made myself quite at home."

"I see," Mrs. Hallam said, with a tone in her voice and a shutting together of her lips which Bertha understood perfectly.

She had gathered up Mrs. Hallam's mantle and bonnet and opera-glass and fan and gloves by this time; and, knowing she was no longer needed, she left the room just as Mrs. Haynes and Grace, who had heard Rex's voice, entered it.

CHAPTER XIII.

AFTER THE OPERA.

THE ladies slept late the next morning, and Rex breakfasted alone and then went to the salon to meet his aunt, as he had promised to do the night before. It

was rather tiresome waiting, and he found himself wishing Bertha would come in, and wondering where she was. As a young man of position and wealth and unexceptionable habits, he was a general favorite with the ladies, and many a mother would gladly have captured him for her daughter, while the daughter would not have said no if asked to be his wife. This he knew perfectly well, but, he said, the daughters didn't fill the bill. He wanted a real girl, not a made-up one, with powdered face, bleached hair, belladonna eyes, and all the obnoxious habits so fast stealing into the best society. Little Louie Thurston had touched his boyish fancy, and he admired her more than any other woman he had ever met; Grace Haynes amused and interested him; but neither she nor Louie possessed the qualities with which he had endowed his ideal wife, who, he had come to believe, did not exist. Thus far everything connected with Bertha Leighton had interested him greatly, and the two hours he had spent alone with her had deepened that interest. She was beautiful, agreeable, and real, he believed, with something fresh and bright and original about her. He was anxious to see her again, and was thinking of going down to the piazza, hoping to find her there, when his aunt appeared, and for the next hour he sat with her, telling her of their friends in New York and of his visit to the Homestead, where he had been so hospitably entertained and made so many discoveries with regard to Bertha.

"She is a great favorite in Leicester," he said, "and I think you have a treasure."

"Yes, she serves me very well," Mrs. Hallam replied, and then changed the conversation, just as Grace

knocked at the door, saying she was going for a walk into town, and asking if Rex would like to go with her.

It was a long ramble they had together, while Grace told him of her acquaintances in Aix, and especially of the young Englishman, Jack Travis, and the Florida orange grove on which he had sunk a thousand dollars with no return.

"Tell him to quit sinking, and go and see to it himself," Rex said. "Living in England or at the North and sending money South to be used on a grove, is much like a woman trying to keep house successfully by sitting in her chamber and issuing her orders through a speaking tube, instead of going to the kitchen herself to see what is being done there."

Rex's illustrations were rather peculiar, but they were sensible. Grace understood this one perfectly, and began to revolve in her mind the feasibility of advising Jack to go to Florida and attend to his business himself, instead of talking through a tube. Then she spoke of Bertha, and was at once conscious of an air of increased interest in Reginald, as she told him how much she liked the girl and how strangely he seemed to be mixed up with her.

"You see, Mrs. Hallam tells mamma everything, and so I know all about Rose Arabella Jefferson's picture. I nearly fell out of my chair when I heard about it; and I know, too, about your knocking Miss Leighton down on the Teutonic ——"

"Wha-at!" Rex exclaimed; "was that Ber—Miss Leighton, I mean?"

"Certainly that was Bertha. You may as well call her that when with me," Grace replied. "I knew you

would admire her. You can't help it. I am glad you have come, and I hope you will rectify a lot of things."

Rex looked at her inquiringly, but before he could ask what she meant, they turned a corner and came upon Jack Travis, who joined them, and on hearing that Rex was from New York began to ask after his orange grove, as if he thought Reginald passed it daily on his way to his business.

"What a stupid you are!" Grace said. "Mr. Hallam never saw an orange grove in his life. Why, you could put three or four United Kingdoms into the space between New York and Florida."

"Reely! How very extraordinary!" the young Englishman said, utterly unable to comprehend the vastness of America, towards which he was beginning to turn his thoughts as a place where he might possibly live on seven hundred dollars a year with Grace to manage it and him.

When they reached the hotel it was lunch-time, and after a few touches to his toilet Rex started for the *salle-à-manger*, thinking that now he should see Bertha, in whom he felt a still greater interest since learning that it was she to whom he had given the black eye on the Teutonic. "The hand of fate is certainly in it," he thought, without exactly knowing what the *it* referred to. Mrs. Hallam and Mrs. Haynes and Grace were already at the table when he entered the room and was shown to the only vacant seat, between his aunt and Grace.

"This must be Miss Leighton's place," he said, standing by the chair. "I do not wish to keep her from her accustomed seat. Where is she?" and he looked up and down both sides of the long table, but did not see her,

"Where is she?" he asked again, and his aunt replied "She is not coming to-day. Sit down, and I will explain after lunch."

"What is there to explain?" he thought, as he sat down and glanced first at his aunt's worried face, then at Grace, and then at Mrs. Haynes.

Then an idea occurred to him which almost made him jump from his chair. He said to Grace:

"Does Miss Leighton lunch in her room?"

"Oh, no," Grace replied.

"Doesn't she come here?" he persisted.

"Your aunt will explain. I would rather not," Grace said.

There was something wrong, Rex was sure, and he finished lunch before the others and left the salon just in time to see Bertha half-way up the second flight of stairs. Bounding up two steps at a time, he soon stood beside her, with his hand on her arm to help her up the next flight.

"I have not seen you this morning. Where have you kept yourself?" he asked, and she replied:

"I have been busy in your aunt's room."

"Where is her maid?" was his next question, and Bertha answered:

"She has been gone some time."

"And *you* fill her place?"

"I do what Mrs. Hallam wishes me to."

"Why were you not at lunch?"

"I have been to lunch."

"*You have!* Where?"

"Where I always take it."

"And *where* is that?"

There was something in Rex's voice and manner

which told Bertha that he was not to be trifled with, and she replied, "I take my meals in the servants' hall, or rather with the maids and nurses and couriers. It is not bad when you are accustomed to it," she added, as she saw the blackness on Reginald's face and the wrath in his eyes. They had now reached the door of Mrs. Hallam's room, and Mrs. Hallam was just leaving the elevator in company with Mrs. Haynes, who very wisely went into her own apartment and left her friend to meet the storm alone.

And a fierce storm it was. At its close Mrs. Hallam was in tears, and Rex was striding up and down the salon like an enraged lion. Mrs. Hallam had tried to apologize and explain, telling how respectful all the couriers and valets were, how much less it cost, and that Mrs. Haynes said the English sent their companions there, and governesses too, sometimes. Rex did not care a picayune for what the English did; he almost swore about Mrs. Haynes, whose handiwork he recognized; he scorned the idea of its costing less, and said that unless Bertha were at once treated as an equal in every respect he would either leave the hotel or join her in the second-class salon and see for himself whether those rascally Russians and Turks and Frenchmen looked at her as they had no business to look.

At this point Bertha, who had no suspicion of what was taking place in the salon, and who wished to speak to Mrs. Hallam, knocked at the door. Rex opened it with the intention of sending the intruder away, but when he saw Bertha he bade her come in, and, standing with his back against the door, went over the whole matter again and told her she was to join them at dinner.

"And if there is no place for you at my aunt's end of

the table there is at the other, and I shall sit there with you," he said.

He had settled everything satisfactorily, he thought, when a fresh difficulty arose with Bertha herself. She had listened in surprise to Rex, and smiled gratefully upon him through the tears she could not repress, but she said, "I cannot tell you how much I thank you for your sympathy and kind intentions. But really I am not unhappy in the servants' hall, nor have I received the slightest discourtesy. Browne, our courier, has stood between me and everything which might have been unpleasant, and I have quite a liking for my companions. And,"—here her face hardened and her eyes grew very dark,—"nothing can induce me to join your party as you propose while Mrs. Haynes is in it. She has worried and insulted me from the moment she saw me. She suggested and urged my going to the servants' hall against your aunt's wishes, and has never let an opportunity pass to make me feel my subordinate position. I like Miss Haynes very much, but her mother ——" there was a toss of Bertha's head indicative of her opinion of the mother, an opinion which Rex fully shared, and if he could he would have turned Mrs. Haynes from the hotel bag and baggage.

But this was impossible. He could neither dislodge her nor move Bertha from her decision, which he understood and respected. But he could take her and his aunt away from Aix and commence life under different auspices in some other place. He had promised to join a party of friends at Chamonix, and he would go there at once, and then find some quiet, restful place in Switzerland, from which excursions could be made and where his aunt could join him with Bertha. This was his plan,

which met with Mrs. Hallam's approval. She was getting tired of Aix, and a little tired, too, of Mrs. Haynes, who had not helped her into society as much as she had expected. Lady Gresham, though civil, evidently shunned the party, presumably because of Grace's flirtation with Jack, while very few desirable people were on terms of intimacy with her, and the undesirable she would not notice. In fresh fields, however, with Rex, who took precedence everywhere, she should do better, and she was quite willing to go wherever and whenever he chose. That night at dinner she told Mrs. Haynes her plans, and that Rex was to leave the next day for Chamonix.

"So soon? I am surprised, and sorry, too; Grace has anticipated your coming so much and planned so many things to do when you came. She will be so disappointed. Can't we persuade you to stop a few days at least?" Mrs. Haynes said, leaning forward and looking at Rex with a very appealing face, while Grace stepped on her foot and whispered to her:

"For heaven's sake, don't throw me at Rex Hallam's head, and make him more disgusted with us than he is already."

The next morning Rex brought his aunt a little, black-eyed French girl, Eloïse, whom he had found in town, and who had once or twice served in the capacity of maid. He had made the bargain with her himself, and such a bargain as he felt sure would ensure her stay in his aunt's service, no matter what was put upon her. He had also enumerated many of the duties the girl was expected to perform, and among them was waiting upon Miss Leighton equally with his aunt. He laid great stress upon this, and, in order to secure Eloïse's

respect for Bertha, he insisted if the latter would not go to the same table with Mrs. Haynes she should take her meals in the salon. To this Bertha reluctantly consented, and at dinner she found herself installed in solitary state in the handsome salon and served like a young empress by the obsequious waiter, who, having seen the color of Reginald's gold, was all attention to Mademoiselle. It was a great change, and in her loneliness she half wished herself back with her heterogeneous companions, who had amused and interested her, and to some of whom she was really attached. But just as dessert was served Rex came in and joined her, and everything was changed, for there was no mistaking the interest he was beginning to feel in her ; it showed itself in ways which never fail to reach a woman's heart. At his aunt's earnest entreaty he had decided to spend another night at Aix, but he left the next morning with instructions that Mrs. Hallam should be ready to join him whenever he wrote her to do so.

"And mind," he said, laying a hand on each of her shoulders, "don't you bring Mrs. Haynes with you, for I will not have her. Pension her off, if you want to, and I will pay the bill ; but leave her here."

CHAPTER XIV.

AT THE BEAU-RIVAGE.

"BEAU-RIVAGE, OUCHY, SWITZERLAND, August 4, 18—.

"TO MISS BERTHA LEIGHTON, Hôtel Splendide,
Aix-les-Bains, Savoie.

"Fred is dying, and I am ill in bed. Come at once.

"LOUIE THURSTON."

This was the telegram which Bertha received about a week after Rex's departure for Chamonix, and within an hour of its receipt her trunk was packed and she was ready for the first train which would take her to Ouchy. Mrs. Hallam had made no objection to her going, but, on the contrary, seemed rather relieved than otherwise, for since the revolution which Rex had brought about she hardly knew what to do with Bertha. The maid Eloïse had proved a treasure, and under the combined effects of Rex's *pourboire* and Rex's instructions, had devoted herself so assiduously to both Mrs. Hallam and Bertha that it was difficult to tell which she was serving most. But she ignored Mrs. Haynes entirely, saying that Monsieur's orders were for *his* Madame and *his* Mademoiselle, and she should recognize the rights of no third party until he told her to do so. In compliance with Rex's wishes, very decidedly expressed, Mrs. Hallam now took all her meals in the salon with Bertha, but they were rather dreary affairs, and, although sorry for the cause, both were glad when an opportunity came for a change.

"Certainly it is your duty to go," Mrs. Hallam said, when Bertha handed her the telegram, while Mrs. Haynes also warmly approved of the plan, and both expressed surprise that Bertha had never told them of her relationship to Mrs. Fred Thurston.

They knew Mrs. Fred was a power in society, and Mrs. Haynes had met her once or twice and through a friend had managed to attend a reception at her house, which she described as magnificent. To be Mrs. Fred Thurston's cousin was to be somebody, and both Mrs. Hallam and Mrs. Haynes became suddenly interested in Bertha, the latter offering her advice with regard to the journey, while the former suggested the propriety of sending Browne as an escort. But Bertha declined the offer. She could speak the language fluently and would have no difficulty whatever in finding her way to Ouchy, she said, but she thanked the ladies for their solicitude and parted with them, apparently, on the most amicable terms. Grace accompanied her to the station, and while waiting for the train said to her confidentially, "I expect there will be a bigger earthquake bye-and-bye than Rex got up on your account. Jack and I are engaged. I made up my mind last night to take the great, good-natured, awkward fellow and run my chance on seven hundred dollars a year. It will come off early in the autumn, and we shall go to Florida and see what we can do with that orange-grove. Jack will have to work, and so shall I, and I shall like it and he won't, but I shall keep him at it, trust me. Can you imagine mother's disgust when I tell her? She really thinks that I have a chance with Rex. But that is folly. Play your cards well. I think you hold a lone

hand. There's your train. Write when you get there, Good-bye."

There was a friendly parting, a rush through the gate for the carriages, a slamming of doors, and then the train sped on its way, bearing Bertha to a new phase of life in Ouchy.

Thurston had been sick all the voyage, and instead of resting in Paris, as Rex had advised him and Louie had entreated him to do, he had started at once for Geneva and taken a severe cold on the night train. Arrived at the Beau-Rivage in Ouchy, he refused to see a physician until his wife came down with nervous prostration and one was called for her. Louie had had rather a hard time after Rex left her in Paris, for, as if to make amends for his Jekyll mood on the ship, her husband was unusually unreasonable, and worried her so with sarcasm and taunts and ridicule that her heart was very sore when she reached Ouchy. The excitement of the voyage, with Reginald as her constant companion, was over, and she must again take up the old life, which seemed drearier than ever because everything and everybody were so strange, and she found herself constantly longing for somebody to speak a kind and sympathetic word to her. In this condition of things it was not strange that she succumbed at last to the extreme nervous depression which had affected her in Boston, and which was now so intensified that she could scarcely lift her head from the pillow.

"I am only tired," she said to the physician, a kind, fatherly old man, who asked her what was the matter. "Only tired of life, which is not worth the living." And her sad blue eyes looked up so pathetically into his face that the doctor felt moved with a great pity for this

young, beautiful woman, surrounded with every luxury money could buy, but whose face and words told a story he could not understand until called to prescribe for her husband; and then he knew.

Thurston had made a fight against the illness which was stealing over him and which he swore he would defy. Drugs and doctors were for silly women like Louie, who must be amused, he said, but he would have none of them. "Only exert your will and you can cheat Death himself," was his favorite saying, and he exerted his will, and went to Chillon, rowed on the lake in the moonlight, took a Turkish bath, and next day had a chill, which lasted so long and left him so weak that he consented to see the doctor, but raved like a madman when told that he must go to bed and stay there if he wished to save his life.

"I don't know that I care particularly about it. I haven't found it so very jolly," he said; then, after a moment, he added, with a bitter laugh, "Tell my wife I am likely to shuffle off this mortal coil, and see how it affects her."

He was either crazy, or a brute, or both, the doctor thought, but he made him go to bed, secured the best nurse he could find, and was there early the next morning to see how his patient fared. He found him so much worse that when he went to Louie he asked if she had any friends near who could come to her, saying, "If you have, send for them at once."

Louie was in a state where nothing startled her, and without opening her eyes she said, "Am I going to die?"

"No," was the doctor's reply, and she continued, "Is my husband?"

"I hope not, but he is very ill and growing steadily worse. Have you any friend who will come to you?"

"Yes,—my cousin, Miss Leighton, at Aix," Louie answered; and she dictated the telegram, which the doctor wrote after asking if she had no male friend.

For a moment she hesitated, thinking of Reginald, who would surely come if bidden, and be so strong and helpful. But that would not do; and she answered, "There is no one. Bertha can do everything."

So Bertha was summoned, and the day after the receipt of the telegram she was at the Beau-Rivage, feeling that she had not come too soon when she saw how utterly prostrated Louie was, and how excited and unmanageable Thurston was becoming under the combined effects of fever and his dislike of his nurse, who could not speak a word of English, while he could understand very little French. Frequent altercations were the result, and when Bertha entered the sick-room there was a fierce battle of words going on between the two, Victoire trying to make the patient take his medicine, while Fred sat bolt upright in bed, the perspiration rolling down his face as he fought against the glass and hurled at the half-crazed Frenchman every opprobrious epithet in the English language. As Bertha appeared the battle ceased, but not until the glass with its contents was on the floor, where Thurston had struck it from Victoire's hand.

"Ah, Bertha," he gasped, as he sank exhausted upon his pillow, "did you drop from heaven, or where? and won't you tell this idiot that it is not time to take my medicine? I know, for I have it written down in good English. Blast that French language, which nobody

can understand! I doubt if they do themselves, the gabbling fools, with their *parleys* and *we-we's*."

It did not take Bertha long to bring order out of confusion. She was a natural nurse, and when the doctor came and she proposed to take Victoire's place until a more suitable man was found, her offer was accepted. But it was no easy task she had assumed, and after two days and nights, during which she was only relieved for a few hours by John, Thurston's valet, when sleep was absolutely necessary, she was thoroughly worn out. Leaving the sick man in charge of John, she started for a ramble through the grounds, hoping that the air and exercise would rest and strengthen her. The Thurston rooms were at the rear of a long hall on the second floor, and, as the other end was somewhat in shadow, she only knew that some one was advancing towards her as she went rapidly down the corridor. Nor did she look up until a voice which sent a thrill through every nerve said to her, "Good-afternoon, Miss Leighton. Don't you know me?" Then she stopped suddenly, while a cry of delight escaped her, as she gave both her hands into the warm, strong ones of Rex Hallam, who held them fast while he questioned her rapidly and told her how he chanced to be there. He had joined his party at Chamonix, where they had stayed for several days, crossing the Mer-de-Glace and making other excursions among the mountains and glaciers. He had then made a flying trip to Interlaken, Lucerne, and Geneva, in quest of the place to which he meant to remove his aunt, and had finally thought of Ouchy, where he knew the Thurstons were, and to which he had come in a boat from Geneva. Learning at the office of his friend's illness, he had started at once

for his room, meeting on the way with Bertha, whose presence there he did not suspect. While he talked he led her near to a window, where the light fell full upon her face, showing him how pale and tired it was.

"This will not do," he said, when he had heard her story. "I am glad I have come to relieve you. I shall write to Aix to-day that I am going to stay here, where I can be of service to Fred and Louie, and to you too. You will not go back, of course, while your cousin needs you. And now go out into the sunshine, and bye-and-bye I'll find you somewhere in the grounds."

He had taken matters into his own hands in his masterful way, and Bertha felt how delightful it was to have some one to lean upon, and that one Rex Hallam, whose voice was so full of sympathy, whose eyes looked at her so kindly, and whose hands held hers so long and seemed so unwilling to release them. With a blush she withdrew them from his clasp. Leaving her at last, he walked down the hall, entering Louie's room first and finding her asleep, with her maid in charge. For a moment he stood looking at her white, wan face, which touched him more than her fair beauty had ever done, for on it he could read the story of her life, and a great pity welled up in his heart for the girl who seemed so like a lovely flower broken on its stem.

"Poor little Louie!" he said, involuntarily, and at the sound of his voice Louie awoke, recognizing him at once, and exclaiming:

"Oh, Rex! I was dreaming of you and the magnolias. I am so glad you are here! You will stay, won't you? I am afraid Fred is going to die, he is so bad, and then what shall I do?"

She gave him her hand, which he did not hold as long

as he had held Bertha's, nor did the holding it affect him the same. Bertha's had been warm and full of life, with something electrical in their touch, which sent the blood bounding through his veins and made him long to kiss them, as well as the bright face raised so eagerly to his. Louie's hand was thin and clammy, and so small that he could have crushed it easily, as he raised it to his lips with the freedom of an old-time friend, and just as he would have done had Fred himself been present. He told her he should stay as long as he was needed, and after a few moments went to see her husband, who was beginning to grow restless and to fret at Bertha's absence. But at sight of Reginald his mood changed, and he exclaimed joyfully :

" Rex, old boy, I wonder if you know how glad I am to see you. I do believe I shall get well now you are here, though I am having a big tussle with some confounded thing,—typhoid, the doctor calls it ; but doctors are fools. How did you happen to drop down here ?"

Rex told him how he chanced to be there, and that he was going to stay, and then, excusing himself, went in quest of Bertha, whom he found sitting upon a rustic seat which was partially concealed by a clump of shrubbery. It was a glorious afternoon, and Rex, who was very fond of boating, proposed a row upon the lake, to which Bertha consented.

" I have had too many races with Harvard not to know how to manage the oars myself," he said, as he handed Bertha into the boat, and dismissing the boy, pushed off from the shore.

It was a delightful hour they spent together gliding over the smooth waters of the lake, and in that time they

became better acquainted than many people do in years. There was no coquetry nor sham in Bertha's nature, while Rex was so open and frank, and they had so much in common to talk about, that restraint was impossible between them. Poor Rose Arabella Jefferson was discussed and laughed over, Rex declaring his intention to find her some time, if he made a pilgrimage to Scotsburg on purpose. Then he spoke of the encounter on the ship, and said :

" I can't tell you how many times I have thought of that girl before I knew it was you, or how I have wanted to see her and apologize properly for my awkwardness. Something seems to be drawing us together strangely." Then he spoke again of his visit to the Homestead, while Bertha became wonderfully animated as she talked of her home, and Rex, watching her, felt that he had never seen so beautiful a face as hers, or listened to a sweeter voice. " I wonder if I am really falling in love," he thought, as he helped her from the boat, while she was conscious of some subtle change wrought in her during that hour on Lake Geneva, and felt that life would never be to her again exactly what it had been.

CHAPTER XV.

THE UNWELCOME GUEST.

THURSTON was very ill with typhoid fever, which held high carnival with him physically, but left him mentally untouched. One afternoon, the fifth after Rex's arrival,

the two were alone, and for some time Fred lay with his eyes closed and an expression of intense thought upon his face. Then, turning suddenly to Rex, he said, "Sit close to me. I want to tell you something."

Rex drew his chair to the bedside, and Fred continued, "That idiot of a doctor has the same as told me I am going to die, and, though I don't believe him, I can't help feeling a little anxious about it, and I want you to help me get ready."

"Certainly," Rex answered, with a gasp, entirely misunderstanding Fred's meaning, and wishing the task of getting his friend ready to die had devolved on some one else. "We hope to pull you through, but it is always well to be prepared for death, and I'll help you all I can. I'm afraid, though, you have called upon a poor stick. I might say the Lord's Prayer with you, or, better yet," and Rex grew quite cheerful, "there's a young American clergyman in the hotel. I will bring him to see you. He'll know just what to say."

"Thunder!" Fred exclaimed, so energetically that Rex started from his chair. "Don't be a fool. I shall die as I have lived, and if there is a hereafter, which I doubt, I shall take my chance with the rest. I don't want your clergy round me, though I wouldn't object to hearing you say, 'Our Father.' It would be rather jolly. I used to know it with a lot of other things, but I quit it long ago,—left all the praying to Louie, who goes on her knees regularly night and morning in spite of my ridicule. Once, when she was posing beautifully, with her long, white dressing-gown spread out a yard or so on the floor, I walked over it on purpose to irritate her, but didn't succeed. I never did succeed very well with Louie. But it is more my fault than

hers, although I was fonder of her than she ever knew. She never pretended to love me. She told me she didn't when she promised to marry me, and when I asked her if any one stood between us she said no, but added that there was somebody for whom she could have cared a great deal if he had cared for her. I did not ask her who it was, but I think I know, and she would have been much happier with him than with me. Poor Louie! maybe she will have a chance yet; and if she does I am willing."

His bright, feverish eyes were fixed curiously on Rex, as he went on, "It's for Louie and her matters I want help, not for my soul; that's all right, if I have one. Louie is a child in experience, and you must see to her when I am gone, and stand by her till she goes home. There'll be an awful row with the landlord, and no end of expense, and a terrible muss to get me to America. My man, John, will take what there is left of me to Mount Auburn, if you start him right. Louie can't go, and you must stay with her and Bertha. If Mrs. Grundy kicks up a row about your chaperoning a handsome girl and a pretty young widow,—and, by Jove, Louie will be that,—bring your aunt to the rescue; that will make it square. And now about my will. I made one last summer, and left everything to Louie on condition that she did not marry again. That was nonsense. She will marry if the right man offers;—wild horses can't hold her; and I want you to draw up another will, with no conditions, giving a few thousands to the Fresh Air Fund and the Humane Society. That will please Louie. She's great on children and horses. What is it about a mortgage on old man Leighton's farm? Louie wanted me to pay it and keep Bertha

from going out to service, as she called it. But I was in one of my moods, and swore I wouldn't. I am sorry now I didn't. Maybe I have a soul, after all, and that is what is nagging me so when I think of the past. I wish I knew how much the mortgage was."

"I know; I can tell you," Rex said, with a great deal of animation, as he proceeded to narrate the particulars of the mortgage and his visit to the Homestead, while Fred listened intently.

"Ho-ho," he said, with a laugh, when Rex had finished. "Is that the way the wind blows? I thought maybe—but never mind. Five hundred, is it? I'll make it a thousand, payable to Bertha at once. You'll find writing-materials in the desk by the window. And hurry up; I'm getting infernally tired."

It did not take long to make the will, and when it was finished, Rex and Mr. Thurston's valet John and Louie's maid Martha, all Americans, witnessed it. After that Fred, who was greatly exhausted, fell into a heavy sleep, and when he awoke Bertha was alone with him. He seemed very feverish, and asked for water, which she gave him, and then bathed his forehead and hands, while he said to her faintly, "You are a trump. I wish I'd made it two thousand instead of one; but Louie will make it right. Poor Louie! she's going to be so disappointed. It's a big joke on her. I wonder how she will take it."

Bertha had no idea what he meant, and made no reply, while he continued, "Say, how does a fellow feel when he has a soul?"

Bertha felt sure now that he was delirious, but before she could answer he went on, "I never thought I had one, but maybe I have. I feel so sorry for a lot of

things, and mostly about Louie. Tell her so when I am dead. Tell her I wasn't half as bad a sort as she thought. It will be like her to swathe herself in crape, with a veil which sweeps the ground. Tell her not to. Black will not become her. Think of Louie in a widow's cap !"

Weak as he was, he laughed aloud at the thought of it, and then began to talk of the prayer which had "forgive" in it, and which Rex was to say with him.

"Do you know it?" he asked, and, with her heart swelling in her throat, Bertha answered that she did, and asked if she should say it.

He nodded, and Rex, who at that moment came unobserved to the door, never forgot the picture of the kneeling girl and the wistful, pathetic expression on the face of the dying man as he tried to say the words which had once been familiar to him.

"Amen ! So be it ! Finis ! I guess that makes it about square. Tell Louie I prayed," he whispered, faintly, and never spoke again until the early morning sunlight was shining on the lake and the hills of Savoy, when he started suddenly and called, "Louie, Louie ! Where are you ? I can't find you. Oh, Louie, come to me."

But Louie was asleep in her room across the long salon, and when, an hour later, she awoke, Bertha told her that her husband was dead.

CHAPTER XVI.

TANGLED THREADS.

As Thurston had predicted, there was a great deal of trouble and no end of expense; but Rex attended to everything, while Bertha devoted herself to Louie, who had gone from one hysterical paroxysm into another until she was weaker and more helpless than she had ever been, but not too weak to talk continually of Fred, who, one would suppose, had been the tenderest of husbands. All she had suffered at his hands was forgotten, wiped out by the message he had left for her and by knowing that his last thoughts had been of her. But she spurned the idea of not wearing black, and insisted that boxes of mourning dresses and bonnets and caps should be sent to her on approbation from Geneva and Lausanne, until her room looked like a bazaar of crape, and not only Bertha and Martha, the maid, but Rex was more than once called in for an opinion as to what would be most suitable. It was rather a peculiar position in which Rex found himself,—two young ladies on his hands, with one of whom he was in love, while the other would unquestionably be in love with him as soon as her first burst of grief was over and she had settled the details of her wardrobe. But he did not mind it; in fact, he found it delightful to be associated daily with Bertha, and to be constantly applied to for sympathy and advice by Louie, who treated him with the freedom and confidence of a sister, and he would not have

thought of a change, if Bertha had not suggested it. She had been told of the bequest which secured the Homestead from sale and made it no longer necessary for her to return to Mrs. Hallam, and she wrote at once asking to be released from her engagement, but saying she would keep it if her services were still desired.

It was a very gracious reply which Mrs. Hallam returned to her, freeing her from all obligations to herself, while something in the tone of the letter made Bertha suspect that all was not as rose-colored at Aix as it had been, and that Mrs. Hallam would be glad to make one of the party at Ouchy. This she said to Rex, suggesting that he should invite his aunt to join them, and urging so strongly the propriety of either bringing her to him, or going himself to her, that he finally wrote to his aunt to come to him, and immediately received a reply that she would be with him the next day. Rex met her at the station in Lausanne, and Bertha received her at the hotel as deferentially and respectfully as if she were still her hired companion, a condition which Mrs. Hallam had made up her mind to ignore, especially as it no longer existed between them. Taking both Bertha's hands in hers, she kissed her effusively and told her how much better she was looking since she left Aix.

"And no wonder," she said. "The air there was not good, and either that or something made me very nervous, so that I did things for which I am sorry, and which I hope you will forget."

This was a great concession which Bertha received graciously, and the two were on the best of terms when they entered Louie's room. Louie had improved rapidly during the week, and was sitting in an easy-

chair by the window, clad in a most becoming tea-gown fashioned at Worth's for the first stages of deep mourning, and looking more like a girl of eighteen than a widow of twenty-five. Notwithstanding her husband's assertion that black would not become her, she had never been half so lovely as she was in her weeds, and her face was never so fair as when framed in her little crêpe bonnet and widow's cap, which sat so jauntily on her golden hair. "Dazzlingly beautiful and altogether irresistible," was Mrs. Hallam's opinion as the days went by, and Louie grew more and more cheerful and sometimes forgot to put Fred's photograph under her pillow, and began to talk less of him and more to Rex, whose attentions she claimed with an air of ownership which would have amused Bertha if she could have put from her the harrowing thought of what might be a year hence, when the grave at Mount Auburn was not as new, or Louie's loss as fresh, as they were now.

"He cannot help loving her," she would say to herself, "and I ought to be glad to have her happy with him."

But she was not glad, and it showed in her face, whose expression Rex could not understand. Louie's was one of those natures which, without meaning to be selfish, make everything subservient to them. She was always the centre about which others revolved, and Rex was her willing slave, partly because of Thurston's dying charge, and partly because he could not resist her pretty appealing ways, and would not if he could. But he never dreamed of associating his devotion to her with Bertha's growing reserve. She was his real queen, without whom his life at Ouchy would have been very

irksome, and when she suggested going home, as Dorcas had written urging her to do, he protested against it almost as strenuously as Louie. She must stay, both said, until she had seen something of Europe besides Aix and Ouchy. So she stayed, and they spent September at Interlaken and Lucerne, October in Paris, and November at the Italian lakes, where she received a letter from Grace, written in New York and signed "Grace Haynes Travis."

"We were married yesterday," she wrote, "and to-morrow we start for our Florida cabin and orange-grove, near Orlando, where so many English people have settled. Mother gave in handsomely at the last, when she found there was no help for it, and I actually won over Lady Gresham, who used to think me a Hottentot, and always spoke of me as 'that dreadful American girl.' She invited mother and me to her country house, The Limes, near London, and suggested that Jack and I be married there. But I preferred New York; so she gave us her blessing and a thousand pounds, and mother, Jack, and I sailed three weeks ago in the Umbria. When are you coming home? and how is that pretty little Mrs. Thurston? I saw her once, and thought her very lovely, with that sweet, clinging, helpless manner which takes with men wonderfully. I have heard that she was an old flame of Rex Hallam's, or rather a young one, but I'll trust you to win him, although as a widow she is dangerous; so, in the words of the immortal Weller, I warn you, 'Bevare of vidders.'"

There was much more in the same strain, and Bertha laughed over it, but felt a pang for which she hated herself every time she looked at Louie, whose beauty and

grace drew about her many admirers besides Rex, in spite of her black dress and her frequent allusions to "dear Fred, whose grave was so far away." She was growing stronger every day, and when in December Rex received a letter from his partner saying that his presence in New York was rather necessary, she declared herself equal to the journey, and said that if Rex went she should go too. Consequently the 1st of January found them all in London, where they were to spend a few days, and where Rex brought his aunt a letter, addressed, bottom side up, to "Mrs. Lucy Ann Hallam, Care of Brown, Shipley & Co., London. *Post Restant.*"

There was a gleam of humor in Rex's eyes as he handed the missive to his aunt, whose face grew dark as she studied the outside, and darker still at the inside, which was wonderful in composition and orthography. Phineas Jones had been sent out to Scotland by an old man who had some property there and who knew he could trust Phineas to look after it and bring him back the rental, which he had found it hard to collect. After transacting his business, Phineas had decided to travel a little and "get cultivated up, so that his cousin Lucy Ann shouldn't be ashamed of him." Had he known where she was, he would have joined her, but, as he did not he wrote her a letter, which had in it a great deal about Sturbridge and the old yellow house and the huckleberry pasture and the circus and the spelling-school, all of which filled Mrs. Hallam with disgust. She was his only blood kin extant, he said, and he yearned to see her, but supposed he must wait till she was back in New York, when he should pay his respects to her at once. And she wouldn't be ashamed of him, either. He knew what was what, and had hob-a-nobbed with nobility,

who took a sight of notice of him. He was going to sail the 10th in the Germanic, he said, and if she'd let him know when she was coming home he'd be in New York on the wharf to meet her.

As it chanced, the Germanic was the boat in which the Hallam party had taken passage for the 10th, but Mrs. Hallam suddenly discovered that she had not seen enough of London ; Rex could go, if he must, but she should wait for the next boat of the same line. Rex had no suspicion as to the real reason for her change of mind, and, as a week or two could make but little difference in the business calling him home, he stayed, and when the next boat of the White Star line sailed out of the docks of Liverpool it carried the party of four : Louie, limp and tearful as she thought of her husband who had been with her when she crossed before ; Mrs. Hallam, excited and nervous, half expecting to see Phineas pounce upon her, and haunted with a presentiment that he was somewhere on the ship ; and Rex, with Bertha, hunting for the spot where he had first seen her and knocked her down.

CHAPTER XVII.

ON THE SEA.

It was splendid weather for a few days, and no one thought of being sea-sick, except Mrs. Hallam, who kept her room, partly because she thought she must, and partly because she could not shake off the feeling

that Phineas was on board. She had read the few names on the passenger-list, but his was not among them, nor did she expect to find it, as he had sailed two weeks before. Still, she would neither go on deck nor into the dining-saloon, and without being really ill, kept her berth and was waited upon by Eloïse, who was accompanying her home. Louie, who was still delicate and who always shrank from cold, stayed mostly in the salon. But the briny, bracing sea air suited Bertha, and for several hours each day she walked the deck with Rex, whose arm was sometimes thrown around her when the ship gave a great lurch, or when on turning a corner they met the wind full in their faces. Then there were the moonlight nights, when the air was full of frost and the waves were like burnished silver, and in her sealskin coat and cap, which Louie had bought for her in Geneva, Bertha was never tired of walking and never thought of the cold, for, if the exercise had not kept her warm, the light which shone upon her from Rex's eyes when she met their gaze would have done so. Perhaps he looked the same at Louie,—very likely he did,—but for the present he was hers alone, and she was supremely happy while the fine, warm weather lasted and with it the companionship on deck. But suddenly there came a change.

Along the western coast of the Atlantic a wild storm had been raging, and when it subsided there it swept towards the east, gathering force as it went, and, joined by the angry winds from every point of the compass, it was almost a cyclone when it reached the Teutonic. But the great ship met it bravely, mounting wave after wave like a feather, then plunging down into the green depths below, then rising again and shaking off the

water as if the boiling sea were a mere plaything and the storm gotten up for its pastime. The passengers, who were told that there was no real danger, kept up their courage while the day lasted, but when the night came on and the darkness grew deeper in the salon, where nearly all were assembled, many a face grew white with fear as they listened to the howling of the wind and the roaring of the sea, while wave after wave struck the ship, which sometimes seemed to stand still, and then, trembling in every joint, rose up to meet the angry waves which beat upon it with such tremendous force.

Early in the day Louie had taken to her bed, where she lay sobbing bitterly, while Bertha tried to comfort her. As the darkness was increasing and the noise overhead grew more and more deafening, Rex brought his aunt to the salon, where, like many of the others, she sat down upon the floor, clinging to one of the chairs for support. Then he went to Louie and asked if he should not take her there too.

"No, no! oh, no!" she moaned. "I'd rather die here, if you will stay with me."

Just then a roll of the ship sent her out upon the floor, where every movable thing in the room had gone before her. After that she made no further resistance, but suffered Bertha to wrap her waterproof around her, and was then carried by Rex and deposited upon one end of a table, where she lay, too much frightened to move, with Rex supporting her on one side and Bertha on the other. And still the storm raged on, and the white faces grew whiter as the question was asked, "What will the end be?" In every heart there was a prayer, and Rex's mind went back to that night at the

Homestead and the prayers for those in peril on the deep. Were they praying now, and would their prayers avail, or would the sad news go to them that their loved one was lying far down in the depths of the sea?

"Oh, if I could save her!" he thought, moving his hand along upon the table until it touched and held hers in a firm clasp which seemed to say, "For life or death you are mine."

Just then Louie began to shiver, and moaned that she was cold.

"Wait a minute, darling," Bertha said, "and I will bring you a blanket from our state-room, if I can get there."

This was no easy task, for the ship was plunging fearfully, and always at an angle which made walking difficult. Twice Bertha fell upon her knees, and once struck her head against the side of the passage, but she reached the room at last, and, securing the blanket, was turning to retrace her steps, when a wave heavier than any which had preceded it struck the vessel, which reeled with what one of the sailors called a double X, pitching and rolling sidewise and endwise and cornerwise all at once. To stand was impossible, and with a cry Bertha fell forward into the arms of Rex Hallam.

"Rex!" she said, involuntarily, and "Bertha!" he replied, showering kisses upon her face, down which the tears were running like rain.

She had been gone so long that he had become alarmed at her absence, and with great difficulty had made his way to the state-room, which he reached in time to save her from a heavy fall. Both were thrown upon the lounge under the window, where they sat for a moment, breathless and forgetful of their danger,

Bertha was the first to speak, saying she must go to Louie, but Rex held her fast, and, steadying himself as best he could, drew her face close to his, and said, "This is not a time for love-making, but I may never have another chance, and, if we must die, death will be robbed of half its terrors if you are with me, my darling, my queen, whom I believe I have loved ever since I saw your photograph and thought it was poor Rose Arabella Jefferson."

He could not repress a smile at the remembrance of that scion of the Jeffersons, but Bertha did not see it. Her head was lying upon his breast, and he was holding to the side of the door to keep from being thrown upon the floor as he urged his suit and then waited for her answer. Against the windows and the dead-lights the waves were dashing furiously, while overhead was a roar like heavy cannonading, mingled with the hoarse shouts of voices calling through the storm. But Rex heard Bertha's answer, and at the peril of his limbs folded her in his arms and said, "Now we live or die together; and I think that we shall live."

Naturally they forgot the blanket and everything else as they groped their way back to the door of the salon, where Rex stopped suddenly at the sound of a voice heard distinctly enough for him to know that some one was praying loudly and earnestly, and to know, too, who it was whose clear, nasal tones could be heard above the din without.

"Phineas Jones!" he exclaimed. "Great Cæsar! how came he here?" And he struggled in with Bertha to get nearer to him."

Phineas had been very ill in Liverpool, and when the Germanic left he was still in bed, and was obliged to

wait two weeks longer, when he took passage on the same ship with Mrs. Hallam. Even then he was so weak that he did not make up his mind to go until an hour before the ship sailed. As there were few passengers, he had no difficulty in securing a berth, where during the first days of the voyage he lay horribly sea-sick and did not know who were on board. He had been too late for his name to be included in the passenger-list, and it was not until the day of the storm that he learned that Mrs. Hallam and Rex and Bertha were on the ship. To find them at once was his first impulse, but when the cyclone struck the boat it struck him, too, with a fresh attack of sea-sickness, from which he did not rally until night, when he would not be longer restrained. Something told him, he said, that Lucy Ann needed him,—in fact, that they all needed him in the cabin, and he was going there. And he went, nearly breaking his neck. Entering the salon on his hands and knees, he made his way to the end of the table on which Louie lay, and near which Mrs. Hallam was clinging desperately to a chair as she crouched upon the floor. It was at this moment that the double X which had sent Bertha into Rex's arms struck the ship, eliciting shrieks of terror from the passengers, who felt that the end had come. Steadying himself against a corner of the table, Phineas called out, in a loud, penetrating voice :

"Silence ! This is no time to scream and cry. It is action you want. Pray to be delivered, as Jonah did. The captain and crew are doing their level best on deck. Let us do ours here, and don't you worry. We shall be heard. The Master who stilled the storm on Galilee is in this boat, and not asleep, either, in the hindermost part. If He was, no human could get to Him, with the

ship nearly bottom side up. He is in our midst. I know it, I feel it; and you who are too scart to pray, and you who don't know how, listen to me. Let us pray."

The effect was electric, and every head was bowed as Phineas began the most remarkable prayer which was ever offered on shipboard. He was in deadly earnest, and, fired with the fervor and eloquence which made him so noted as a class-leader, he informed the Lord of the condition they were in and instructed Him how to improve it. Galilee, he said, was nothing to the Atlantic when on a tear as it was now, but the voice which had quieted the waters of Tiberias could stop this uproar. He presumed some of them ought to be drowned, he said, but they didn't want to be, and were going to do better. Then he confessed every possible sin which might have been committed by the passengers, who, according to his statement, were about the wickedest lot, take them as a whole, that ever crossed the ocean. There were exceptions, of course. There were near and dear friends of his, and one blood kin, on board, for whom he especially asked aid. He had not looked upon the face of his kinswoman for years, but he had never forgotten the sweet counsel they took together when children in Sturbridge, and he would have her saved any way. Like himself, she was old and stricken in years, but ——"

"Horrible!" came in muffled tones from something at his feet, and, looking down, he saw the bundle of shawls, which, in its excitement, had loosened its hold on the chair and was rolling down the inclined plane towards the centre of the room.

Reaching out his long arm, he pulled it back, and,

putting his foot against it, went on with what was now a prayer of thanksgiving. Those who have been in a storm at sea like the one I am describing, will remember how quick they were to detect a change for the better, as the blows upon the ship became less frequent and heavy and the noise overhead began to subside.

Phineas was the first to notice it, and, with his foot still firmly planted against the struggling bundle to keep it in place, he exclaimed, in a voice which was almost a shriek :

"We are saved ! We are saved ! Don't you feel it ? Don't you hear it ?"

They did hear it and feel it, and with glad hearts responded to the words of thanksgiving which Phineas poured forth, saying the answer to his prayer had come sooner than he expected, and acknowledging that his faith had been weak as water. Then he promised a forsaking of their sins, and a life more consistent with the doctrine they professed, for them all, adapting himself as nearly as he could to the forms of worship familiar to the different denominations he knew must be assembled there. For the Presbyterians there was a mention made of foreordination and the Westminster Catechism, for the Baptists, immersion, for the Methodists, sanctification, for the Roman Catholics, the Blessed Virgin ; but he forgot the Episcopalians, until, remembering, with a start, Rex and Lucy Ann, he wound up with :

"From pride, vainglory and hypocrisy, good Lord deliver us. Amen."

The simple earnestness of the man so impressed his hearers that no one thought of smiling at his ludicrous language, and when the danger was really over and

they could stand upon their feet, they crowded around him as if he had been their deliverer from deadly peril, while Rex introduced him as his particular friend. This stamped him as somebody, and he at once became a sort of lion. We are all more or less susceptible to flattery, and Phineas was not an exception ; he received the attentions with a very satisfied air, thinking to himself that if his recent prayers had so impressed them, what would they say if they could hear him when fully under way at a camp-meeting ?

" Where's your aunt ?" he asked Rex, suddenly, while Rex looked round for her, but could not find her.

More dead than alive, Mrs. Hallam had clung to the chair in momentary expectation of going down, never to rise again, and in that awful hour it seemed to her that everything connected with her life had passed before her. The old, yellow house, the grandmother to whom she had not always been kind, the early friends of whom she had been ashamed, the husband she had loved, but whom she had tried so often, all stood out so vividly that it seemed as if she could touch them.

" Everything bad,—nothing good. May God forgive it all !" she whispered more than once, as she lay waiting for the end and shuddering as she thought of the dark, cold waters so soon to engulf her.

In this state of mind she became conscious that some one was standing so close to her that his boots held down a portion of her dress, but she did not mind it, for at that moment Phineas began his prayer, to which she listened intently. She knew it was an illiterate man, that his boots were coarse, that his clothes were saturated with an odor of cheap tobacco, and that he

belonged to a class which she despised because she had once been of it. But as he prayed she felt, as she had never felt before, the Presence he said was there with him, and thought nothing of his class, or his tobacco, or his boots. He was a saint, until he spoke of Sturbridge and his blood kin who was old and stricken in years. Then she knew who the saint was, and as soon as it was possible to do so she escaped to her state-room, where Rex found her in a state of great nervous excitement. She could not and would not see Phineas that night, she said. Possibly she might be equal to it in the morning. With that message Phineas, who was hovering around her door, was obliged to be content, but before he retired, every one with whom he talked knew that Mrs. Hallam was his cousin Lucy Ann, whom he used to know in Sturbridge when she was a girl.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ON SEA AND LAND.

NATURALLY the captain and officers made light of the storm after it was over, citing, as a proof that it was not so very severe, the fact that within four hours after it began to subside the ship was sailing smoothly over a comparatively calm sea, on which the moon and stars were shining as brightly as if it had not so recently been stirred to its depths. The deck had been cleared, and, after seeing Louie in her berth, Bertha went up to join Rex, who was waiting for her. All the past peril

was forgotten in the joy of their perfect love, and they had so much to talk about and so many plans for the future to discuss that the midnight bells sounded before they separated.

"It is not very long till morning, when I shall see you again, nor long before you will be all my own," Rex said, holding her in his arms and kissing her many times before he let her go.

She found Louie asleep, and when next morning Bertha arose as the first gong sounded, Louie was still sleeping, exhausted with the excitement of the previous day. She was evidently dreaming, for there was a smile on her lips which moved once with some word Bertha could not catch, although it sounded like "Rex."

"I wonder if she cares very much for him," Bertha thought, with a twinge of pain. "If she does, I cannot give him up, for he is mine,—my Rex."

She repeated the name aloud, lingering over it as if the sound were very pleasant to her, and just then Louie's blue eyes opened and looked inquiringly at her.

"What is it about Rex?" she asked, smiling up at Bertha in that pretty, innocent way which children have of smiling when waking from sleep. "Has he been to inquire for me?" she continued; and, feeling that she could no longer put it off, Bertha knelt beside her and told her a story which made the bright color fade from Louie's face and her lips quiver in a grieved kind of way as she listened to it.

When it was finished she did not say a word, except to ask if it was not very cold.

"I am all in a shiver. I think I will not get up. Tell

Martha not to come to me. I do not want any breakfast," she said, as she turned her face to the wall.

For a moment Bertha lingered, perplexed and pained, —then started to leave the room.

"Wait," Louie called, faintly, and when Bertha went to her she flung her arms around her neck and said, with a sob, "I am glad for you, and I know you will be happy. Tell Rex I congratulate him. And now go and don't come back for ever so long. I am tired and want to sleep."

When she was alone, the little woman buried her face in the pillows and cried like a child, trying to believe she was crying for her husband, but failing dismally. It was for Rex, whom she had held dearer than she knew, and whom she had lost. But with all her weakness Louie had a good deal of common sense, which soon came to her aid. "This is absurd,—crying for one who does not care for me except as a friend. I'll be a woman, and not a baby," she thought, as she rung for Martha to come and dress her. An hour later she surprised Bertha and Rex, who were sitting on a seat at the head of the stairs, with a rug thrown across their laps, concealing the hands clasped so tightly beneath it. Nothing could have been sweeter than her manner as she congratulated Rex verbally, and then, sitting down by them, began to plan the grand wedding she would give them if they would wait until poor Fred had been dead a little longer, say a year.

Rex had his own ideas about the wedding and waiting, but he did not express them then. He had settled in his own mind when he should take Bertha, and that it would be from the old house in which he began to have a feeling of ownership.

Meanwhile Mrs. Hallam had consented to see Phineas, whom Rex took to her state-room. What passed at the interview no one knew. It did not last long, and at its close Mrs. Hallam had a nervous headache and Phineas's face wore a troubled and puzzled expression. He would never have known Lucy Ann, she had altered so, he said. Not grown old, as he supposed she would, but different somehow. He guessed she was tuckered out with fright and the storm. She'd be better when she got home, and then they'd have a good set-to, talking of the old times. He was going to visit her a few days.

This accounted for her headache which lasted the rest of the voyage, so that she did not appear again until they were at the dock in New York. Handing her keys to Rex, she said, "See to my trunks, and for heaven's sake-keep that man from coming to the house, if you have to strangle him."

She was among the first to leave the ship, and was driving rapidly home, while Phineas was squabbling with a custom-house officer over some jewelry he had bought in Edinburgh as a present for Dorcas, and an overcoat in London for Mr. Leighton, and which he had conscientiously declared.

"I'm a class-leader," he said, "and I'd smile to see me lie, and when they asked me if I had any presents I told 'm yes, a coat for the 'Square, and some cangorms for Dorcas, and I swan if they didn't make me trot 'em out and pay duty, too; and they let more'n fifty trunks full of women's clothes go through for nothin'. I seen 'm. Where's Lucy Ann? I was goin' with her," he said to Rex. who could have enlightened him with re-

gard to the women's clothes which "went through for nothin'," but didn't.

"Mr. Jones," he said, buttonholing him familiarly as they walked out of the custom-house, "my aunt has gone home. She is not feeling well at all, and, as the house is not quite in running order, I do not think you'd better go there now. I'll take you to dine at my club, or, better yet, to the Waldorf, where Mrs. Thurston and Miss Leighton are to stop, and to-morrow we will all go on together, for I'm to see Mrs. Thurston home to Boston, and on my way back shall stop at the Homestead. I am to marry Miss Bertha."

"You be! Well, I'm glad on't; but I do want to see Lucy Ann's house, and I sha'n't make an atom of trouble. She expects me," Phineas said, and Rex replied, "I hardly think she does. Indeed, I know she doesn't, and I wouldn't go if I were you."

Gradually the truth began to dawn upon Phineas, and there was a pathos in his voice and a moisture in his eyes as he said, "Is Lucy Ann ashamed of *me?* I wouldn't have believed it, and she my only kin. I'd go through fire and water to serve her. Tell her so, and God bless her."

Rex felt a great pity for the simple-hearted man to whom the glories of a dinner at the Waldorf did not quite atone for the loss of Lucy Ann, whom he spoke of again when after dinner Rex went with him to the hotel, where he was to spend the night.

"I'm an awkward critter, I know," he said, "and not used to the ways of high society, but I'm respectable, and my heart is as big as an ox."

Nothing, however, rested long on Phineas's mind, and the next morning he was cheerful as ever when he

met his friends at the station, and committed the unwonted extravagance of taking a chair with them in a parlor car, saying as he seated himself that he'd never been in one before, and that he found it tip-top.

CHAPTER XIX.

"I, REX, TAKE THEE, BERTHA."

The words were said in the old Homestead about a year from the time when we first saw Bertha walking along the lane to meet her sister and holding in her hand the newspaper which had been the means of her meeting with Rex Hallam. The May day had been perfect then, and it was perfect now. The air was odorous with the perfume of the pines and the apple-blossoms, and the country seemed as fresh and fair as when it first came from the hands of its Creator. The bequest which Fred had made to Bertha, and which he wished he had doubled, had been quadrupled by Louie, who, when Bertha declined to take so much, had urged it upon her as a bridal present in advance. With that understanding Bertha had accepted it, and several changes had been made in the Homestead, both outside and in. Bertha's room, however, where Rex had once slept, remained intact. This he insisted upon, and it was in this room that he received his bride from the hands of her bridesmaids. It was a very quiet affair, with only a few intimate friends from Worcester and Leicester, and Mrs. Hallam from New York. Bertha

had suggested inviting Mrs. Haynes, but Rex vetoed that decidedly. She had been the direct cause of so much humiliation to Bertha that he did not care to keep her acquaintance, he said. But Mrs. Haynes had no intention to be ignored by the future Mrs. Rex Hallam, and one of the handsomest presents Bertha received came from her, with a note of congratulation. Louie and Phineas were master and mistress of ceremonies, Louie inside and Phineas outside, where he insisted upon caring for the horses of those who drove from Worcester and the village.

He'd "smile if he couldn't do it up ship-shape," he said, and he came at an early hour, gorgeous in swallow-tail coat, white vest, stove-pipe hat, and an immense amount of shirt-front, ornamented with Rhine-stone studs. In his ignorance he did not know that a dress-coat was not just as suitable for morning as evening, and had bought one second-hand at a clothing-store in Boston. He wanted to make a good impression on Lucy Ann, he said to Grace, who had been at the Homestead two or three days, and who, declaring him a most delicious specimen, had hobnobbed with him quite familiarly. She told him she had no doubt he would impress Lucy Ann ; and he did, for she came near fainting when he presented himself to her, asking what she thought of his outfit, and how it would "do for high." She wanted to tell him that he would look far better in his every-day clothes than in that costume, but restrained herself and made some non-committal reply. Since meeting him on the ship she had had time to reflect that no one whose opinion was really worth caring for would think less of her because of her relatives, and she was a little ashamed of her treatment of him. Perhaps,

too, she was softened by the sight of the old homestead, which had been her husband's home, or Grace Travis's avowal that she wished she had just such a dear codger of a cousin, might have had some effect in making her civil and even gracious to the man who, without the least resentment for her former slight of him, "Cousin Lucy Ann"-ed her continually and led her up to salute the bride after the ceremony was over.

There was a wedding breakfast, superintended by Louie, who, if she felt any regret for the might-have-been, did not show it, and was bright and merry as a bird, talking a little of Fred and a great deal of Charlie Sinclair, whom business kept from the wedding and whose lovely present she had helped select. The wedding trip was to extend beyond the Rockies as far as Tacoma, and to include the Fair in Chicago on the homeward journey. The remainder of the summer was to be spent at the Homestead, where Rex could hunt and fish and row to his heart's content, if he could not have a fox-hunt. Both he and Bertha wished a home of their own in New York, but Mrs. Hallam begged so hard for them to stay with her for a year at least that they consented to do so.

"You may be the mistress, or the daughter of the house, as you please, only stay with me," Mrs. Hallam said to Bertha, of whom she seemed very fond.

Evidently she was on her best behavior, and during the few days she stayed at the Homestead she quite won the hearts of both Mr. Leighton and Dorcas, and greatly delighted Phineas by asking him to spend the second week in July with her. In this she was politic and managing. She knew he was bound to come some time, and, knowing that the most of her calling aquaintance

would be out of town in July, she fixed his visit at that time, making him understand that he could not prolong it, as she was to join Rex and Bertha in Chicago on the 15th. Had he been going to visit the queen, Phineas could not have been more elated or have talked more about it.

"I hope I sha'n't mortify Lucy Ann to death," he said, and when in June Louie came for a few days to the Homestead, he asked her to give him some points in etiquette, which he wrote down and studied diligently, till he considered himself quite equal to cope with any difficulty, and at the appointed time packed his dress-suit and started for New York.

This was Monday, and on Saturday Dorcas was surprised to see him walking up the avenue from the car.

He'd had a tip-top time, he said, and Lucy Ann did all she could to make it pleasant.

"But, my!" he added, "it was so lonesome and grand and stiff; and didn't Lucy Ann put on the style! But I studied my notes, and held my own pretty well. I don't think I made more than three or four blunders. I reached out and got a piece of bread with my fork, and saw a thunder-cloud on Lucy Ann's face; and I put on my dress-suit one morning to drive to the Park, but took it off quicker when Lucy Ann saw it. Dress-coats ain't the thing in the morning, it seems. I guess they ain't the thing for me anywhere. But my third blunder was wust of all, though I don't understand it. Between you 'n' I, I don't believe Lucy Ann has much company, for not a livin' soul come to the house while I was there, except one woman with two men in tall boots drivin' her. Lucy Ann was out and the nigger was out, and I went to the door to save the girls

from runnin' up and down stairs so much. I told her Mis' Hallam wa'n't to home, and I rather urged her to come in and take a chair, she looked so kind of disappointed and tired, and curi's, too, I thought, as if she wondered who I was; so I said, 'I'm Mis' Hallam's cousin. You better come in and rest. She'll be home pretty soon.'

"'Thanks,' she said, in a queer kind of way, and handed me a card for Lucy Ann, who was tearin' when I told her what I'd done. It was the servants' business to wait on the door when Peters was out, she said, and on no account was I to ask any one in if she wasn't there. That ain't my idea of hospitality. Is't yours?"

Dorcas laughed, and said she supposed city ways were not exactly like those of the country. Phineas guessed they wasn't, and he was glad to get where he could tip back in his chair if he wanted to, and eat with his knife, and ask a friend to come in and sit down.

A few days later Dorcas and her father, with Louie, started for Chicago to join the Hallams. For four weeks they reveled in the wonders of the beautiful White City. After that Mrs. Hallam returned to her lonely house in New York, while Rex and Bertha and Louie went back to the old Homestead. There they spent the remainder of the summer, and there Bertha lingered until the hazy light of October was beginning to hang over the New England hills and the autumnal tints to show in the woods. Then Rex, who had spent every Sunday there, took her to her new home, where her reception was very different from what it had been on her first arrival. Then she was only a hired companion, dining with the housekeeper and waiting on the fourth floor back for her employer to give her an

audience. Now she was a petted bride, the daughter of the house, with full authority to go where she pleased, do what she pleased, and make any change she pleased, from the drawing-room to the handsome suite which had been fitted up for her. But she made no change, except in Rex's sleeping-apartment, where she did take the pictures of ballet-dancers, rope-walkers, and sporting men from the mirror-frame, and substituted in their place those of her father, Dorcas, and Grace. She would have liked to remove her own picture, with "Rose Arabella Jefferson" written upon it, but Rex interfered. It seemed to him, he said, a connecting link between his bachelor life and the great joy which had come to him, and it should stay there, Rose Arabella and all.

Mr. Leighton and Dorcas have twice visited Bertha in her home, and been happy there because she was so happy. But both were glad to go back to the old house under the apple-trees and the country life which they like best. Bertha, on the contrary, takes readily to the ways of the great city, although she cares but little for the fashionable society that is so eager to take her up, and prefers the companionship of her husband and the quiet of her home to the gayest assemblage in New York. Occasionally however, she may be seen at some afternoon tea, or dinner, or reception, where Mrs. Hallam is proud to introduce her as "my nephew's wife," while Mrs. Walker Haynes, always politic and persistent, speaks of her as "my friend, that charming Mrs. Reginald Hallam."

THE SPRING FARM.

CHAPTER I.

AT THE FARM HOUSE.

It was a very pleasant, homelike old farmhouse, standing among the New England hills, with the summer sunshine falling upon it, and the summer air, sweet with the perfume of roses and June pinks, filling the wide hall and great square rooms, where, on the morning when our story opens, the utmost confusion prevailed. Carpets were up; curtains were down; huge boxes were standing everywhere, while into them two men and a boy were packing the furniture scattered promiscuously around, for on the morrow the family, who had owned and occupied the house so long, were to leave the premises and seek another home in the little village about two miles away. In one of the lower rooms in the wing to the right, where the sunshine was the brightest and the rose-scented air the sweetest, a white-faced woman lay upon a couch looking at and listening to a lady who sat talking to her, with

money and pride and selfishness stamped upon her as plainly as if the words had been placarded upon her back. The lady was Mrs. Marshall-More, of Boston, whose handsome country house was not far from the red farm-house, which, with its rich, well-cultivated acres, had, by the foreclosure of a mortgage she held upon it, recently come into her possession, or rather into that of her half brother, who had bidden it off for her.

Mrs. Marshall-More had once been plain Mrs. John More, but since her husband's death, she had prefixed her maiden name, with a hyphen to the More, making herself Mrs. Marshall-More, which, she thought, had a very aristocratic look and sound. She was a great lady in her own immediate circle of friends in the city, and a greater lady in Merrivale, where she passed her summers, and her manner toward the little woman on the couch was one of infinite superiority and patronage, mingled with a show of interest and pity. She had driven to the farmhouse that morning, ostensibly to say good-bye to the family, but really to go over the place which she had coveted so long as a most desirable adjunct to her possessions. What she was saying to the white-faced woman in the widow's cap was this :

"I am very sorry for you, Mrs. Graham, and I hope you do not blame me for foreclosing the mortgage. I had to have the money, for Archie's college expenses will be very heavy, and then I am going to Europe this summer, and I did not care to draw from my other investments."

"Oh, no, I blame no one, but it is very hard all the same to leave the old home where I have been so

happy," Mrs. Graham replied, and Mrs. Marshall-More went on : "I am glad to hear you say so, for the Merrivale people have been very ill-natured about it and I have heard more than once that I hastened the foreclosure and intend to tear down the old house and build a cottage, which is false."

To this Mrs. Graham made no reply, and Mrs. Marshall-More continued :

"You will be much better off in the village than in this great rambling house, and your children will find employment there. Maude must be eighteen, and ought to be a great help to you. I hear she is a sentimental dreamer, living mostly in the clouds with people only known to herself, and perhaps she needed this change to rouse her to the realities of life."

"Maude is the dearest girl in the world," was the mother's quick protest against what seemed like disapprobation of her daughter.

"Yes, of course," was Mrs. Marshall-More's response. "Maude is a nice girl and a pretty girl and will be a great comfort to you when she wakes up to the fact that life is earnest and not all a dream, and in time you will be quite as happy in your new home as you could be here, where it must be very dreary in the winter, when the snow-drifts are piled up to the very window ledges, and the wind screams at you through every crevice."

"Oh-h," Mrs. Graham said, with a shudder, her thoughts going back to the day when the blinding snow had come down in great billows upon the newly-made grave in which she left her husband, and went back alone to the desolate home where he would never come again.

It had been so terrible and sudden, his going from

her. Well in the morning, and dead at night; killed by a locomotive and brought to her so mangled that she could never have recognized him as her husband. People had called him over-generous and extravagant, and perhaps he was, but the money he spent so lavishly was always for others, and not for himself, and as the holder of the heavy mortgage on his farm had been content with the interest and never pressed his claim, he had made no effort to lessen it, even after he knew it passed into the hands of Mrs. Marshall-More, who had often expressed a wish to own the place known as the Spring Farm, and so-called from the numerous springs upon it. She would fill it with her city friends and set up quite an English establishment, she said; and now it was hers, to all intents and purposes, for though the deed was in her brother's name, it was understood that she was mistress of the place and could do what she liked with it. Of the real owner, Max Gordon, her half-brother, little was known, except the fact that he was very wealthy and had for years been engaged to a lady who, by a fall from a horse, had been crippled for life. It was also rumored that the lady had insisted upon releasing her lover from his engagement, but he had refused to be released, and still clung to the hope that she would eventually recover. Just where he was at present, nobody knew. He seldom visited his sister, although she was very proud of him and very fond of talking of her brother Max, who, she said, was so generous and good, although a little queer. He had bidden off the Spring Farm because she asked him to do so, and a few thousand dollars more or less were nothing to him; then, telling her to do what she liked with it, he had gone his way, while poor Lucy Graham's heart was

breaking at the thought of leaving the home which her husband had made so beautiful for her. An old-fashioned place, it is true, but one of those old-fashioned places to which our memory clings fondly, and our thoughts go back with an intense longing years after the flowers we have watered are dead, and the shrubs we have planted are trees pointing to the sky. A great square house, with a wing on either side, a wide hall through the center and a fireplace in every room. A well-kept lawn in front, dotted with shade trees and flowering shrubs, and on one side of it a running brook, fed by a spring on the hillside to the west ; borders and beds and mounds of flowers ;—tulips and roses and pansies and pinks and peonies and lilies and geraniums and verbenas, each blossoming in its turn and making the garden and grounds a picture of beauty all the summer long. No wonder that Lucy Graham loved it and shrank from leaving it, and shrank, too, from Mrs. Marshall-More's attempts at consolation, saying only when that lady arose to go, " It was kind in you to come and I thank you for it ; but just now my heart aches too hard to be comforted. Good-bye."

" Good-bye, I shall call when you get settled in town, and if I can be of any service to you I will gladly do so," Mrs. Marshall-More said, as she left the room and went out to her carriage, where she stood for a moment looking up and down the road, and saying to herself, " Where can Archie be ?"

CHAPTER II.

WHERE ARCHIE WAS.

A LONG lane wound away to the westward across a strip of land called the mowing lot, through a bit of woods and on to a grassy hillside, where, under the shade of a butternut tree, a pair of fat, sleek oxen were standing with a look of content in their large, bright eyes as if well pleased with this unwonted freedom from the plough and the cart. Against the side of one of them a young girl was leaning, with her arm thrown across its neck and her hand caressing the long, white horn of the dumb creature which seemed to enjoy it. The girl was Maude Graham, and she made a very pretty picture as she stood there with her short, brown hair curling in soft rings about her forehead ; her dark blue eyes, her bright, glowing face, and a mouth which looked as if made for kisses and sweetness rather than the angry words she was hurling at the young man, or boy, for he was only twenty, who stood before her.

"Archie More," she was saying, "I don't think it very nice in you to talk to me in that patronizing kind of way, as if you were so much my superior in everything, and trying to convince me that it is nothing for us to give up the dear old place where every stone and stump means somebody to me, for I know them all and have talked with them all, and called them by name, just as I know all the maiden ferns and water lilies and where the earliest arbutus blossoms in the spring. Oh, Archie, how can I leave Spring Farm and never come back

again! I think I hate you all for taking it from us, and especially your uncle Max."

Here she broke down entirely, and laying her face on the shining coat of the ox began to cry as if her heart would break, while Archie looked at her in real distress wondering what he should say. He was a city-bred young man, with a handsome, boyish face, and in a way very fond of Maude, whom he had known ever since he was thirteen and she eleven, and he first came to Merrivale to spend the summer. They had played and fished together in the brook, and rowed together on the pond and quarreled and made up, and latterly they had flirted a little, too, although Archie was careful that the flirting should not go too far, for he felt that there was a vast difference between Archie More, son of Mrs. Marshall-More, and Maude Graham, daughter of a country farmer. And still he thought her the sweetest, prettiest girl he had ever seen, a *jolly lot* he called her, and he writhed under her bitter words, and when she cried he tried to comfort her and explain matters as best he could. But Maude was not to be appeased. She had felt all the time that the place need not have been sold, that it was a hasty thing, and though she did not blame Archie, she was very sore against Mrs. Marshall-More and her brother, and her only answer to all Archie could say, was:

"You needn't talk. I hate you all, and your uncle Max the most, and if I ever see him I'll tell him so, and if I don't you may tell him for me."

Archie could keep silent and hear his mother blamed and himself, but he roused in defense of his uncle Max.

"Hate my uncle Max," he exclaimed. "Why, he is the best man that ever lived, and the kindest. He

knew nothing of you, or how you'd feel, when he bought the place ; if he had he wouldn't have done it ; and if he could see you now, crying on that ox's neck, he would give it back to you. That would be just like him."

"As if I'd take it," Maud said, scornfully, as she lifted up her head and dashed the tears from her eyes with a rapid movement of both hands. "No, Archie More, I shall never take Spring Farm as a gift from any one, much less from your uncle Max ; but I shall buy it of him some day if he keeps it long enough."

"You ?" Archie asked, and Maude replied, "Yes, I, why not ? I know I am poor now, but I shall not alway be so. People call me crazy, a dreamer, a crank, and all that, because they cannot see what I see ; the people who are with me always, my friends ; and I know their names and how they look and where they live ; Mrs. Kimbrick, with her fifty daughters, all Eliza Anns, and Mrs. Webster, with her fifty daughters, all Ann Elizas, and Angeline Mason, who comes and talks to me in the twilight, wearing a yellow dress ; they are real to me as you are, and do you think I am crazy and a crank because of that ?"

Archie said he didn't, but he looked a little suspiciously at the girl standing there so erect, her eyes shining with a strange light as she talked to him of things he could not understand. He had heard of this Mrs. Kimbrick and Mrs. Webster before, with their fifty daughters each, and had thought Maude queer, to say the least. He was sure of it now as she went on :

"Is the earth crazy because there is in it a little acorn which you can't see, but which is still there, maturing and taking root for the grand old oak, whose branches will one day give shelter to many a tired

head? Of course not; neither am I, and some time these brain children, or brain seeds, call them what you like, will take shape and grow, and the world will hear of them, and of me; and you and your mother will be proud to say you knew me once, when the people praise the book I am going to write."

"A book!" and Archie laughed incredulously, it seemed so absurd that little Maude Graham should ever become an author of whom the world would hear.

"Yes," she answered him decidedly. "A book! Why not? it is in me; it has been there always, and I can no more help writing it than you can help doing,—well, nothing, as you always have. Yes, I shall write a book, and you will read it, Archie More, and thousands more, too; and I shall put Spring Farm in it, and you, and your uncle Max. I think I shall make him the villain."

She was very hard upon poor Max, whose only offense was that he had bidden off Spring Farm to please his sister, but Archie was ready to defend him again.

"If you knew uncle Max," he said, "you would make him your hero instead of your villain, for a better man never lived. He is kindness itself and the soul of honor. Why, when he was very young he was engaged to a girl who fell from a horse and broke her leg, or her neck, or her back, I've forgotten which. Anyhow, she cannot walk and has to be wheeled in a chair, but Max sticks to her like a burr, because he thinks he ought. I am sure I hope he will never marry her."

"Why not?" Maude asked, and he replied:

"Because, you see, Max has a heap of money, and if

he never marries and I outlive him, some of it will come to me. Money is a good thing, I tell you."

"I didn't suppose you as mean as that, Archie More! and I hope Mr. Max will marry that broken-backed woman, and that she will live a thousand years! Yes, I do!"

The last three words were emphasized with so vigorous blows on the back of the ox, that he started away suddenly, and Maude would have fallen if Archie had not caught her in his arms.

"Now, Maude," he said, as he held her for a moment closely to him, "don't let's quarrel any more. I'm going away to-morrow to the Adirondacks, then in the fall to college, and may not see you again for a long time; but I sha'n't forget you. I like you the best of any girl in the world; I do, upon my honor."

"No, you don't. I know exactly what you think of me, and always have, but it does not matter now," Maude answered vehemently. "You are going your way, and I am going mine, and the two ways will never meet."

And so, quarreling and making up, but making up rather more than they quarreled, the two went slowly along the gravelly lane until they reached the house where Mrs. Marshall-More was standing with a very severe look upon her face, as she said to her son:

"Do you know how long you have kept me waiting?"

Then to Maude:

"Been crying? I am sorry you take it so hard. Believe me, you will be better off in the village. Neither your mother nor you could run the farm, and you will find some employment there. I hear that Mrs. Nipe is wanting an apprentice and that she will give small

wages at first, which is not usual with dressmakers. You'd better apply at once."

"Thank you," Maude answered quickly. "I do not think I shall learn dressmaking," and Maude looked at the lady as proudly as a queen might look upon her subject. "Mrs. More, do you think your brother would promise to keep Spring Farm until I can buy it back?" she continued.

The idea that Maude Graham could ever buy Spring Farm was so preposterous that Mrs. Marshall-More laughed immoderately, as she replied, "Perhaps so. I will ask him; or you can do it yourself. I don't know where he is now. I seldom do know, but anything addressed to his club, No. ——, ——— Street, Boston, will reach him in time. And now we must go. Good-bye."

She offered the tips of her fingers to the girl who just touched them, and then giving her hand to Archie said, "Good-bye, Archie, I am sorry we quarreled so, and I did not mean half I said to you. I hope you will forget it. Good-bye; I may never see you again."

If Archie had dared he would have kissed the face which had never looked so sweet to him as now; but his mother's eyes were upon him and so he only said "Good-bye," and took his seat in the carriage with a feeling that something which had been very dear had dropped out of his life.

CHAPTER III.

GOING WEST.

It was a very plain but pretty little cottage of which Mrs. Graham took possession with her children, Maude and John, who was two years younger than his sister. As most of the furniture had been sold it did not take them long to settle, and then the question arose as to how they were to live. A thousand dollars was all they had in the world, and these Mrs. Graham placed in the savings bank against a time of greater need, hoping that, as her friends assured her, something would turn up. "If there was anything I could do, I would do it so willingly," Maude was constantly saying to herself, while busy with the household duties which now fell to her lot and to which she was unaccustomed. During her father's life two strong German girls had been employed in the house and Maude had been as tenderly and delicately reared as are the daughters of millionaires. But now everything was changed, and those who had known her only as an idle dreamer and devourer of books, were astonished at the energy and capability which she developed. But these did not understand the girl or know that all the stronger part of her nature had been called into being by the exigencies of the case. Maude's love for her mother was deep and unselfish, and for her sake she tried to make the most and the best of everything. Stifling with a smile born of a sob all her longings for the past, she turned her thoughts steadily to the one purpose of her life,—buy-

ing Spring Farm back! But how? The book she was going to write did not seem quite so certain now. Her brain children had turned traitors and flown away from the sweeping, dusting, dishwashing and bedmaking which fell to her lot and which she did with a song on her lips lest her mother should detect the heartache which was always with her, even when her face was the brightest and her song the sweetest. She had written to Archie's uncle without a suspicion that she did not know his real name. As he was a brother of Mrs. More, whose maiden name was Marshall, his must be Marshall too, she reasoned, forgetting to have heard that Mrs. More was only a half-sister and that there had been two fathers. Of course, he was Max Marshall, and she addressed him as follows:

"MERRIVALE, July —, 18—.

"MR. MAX MARSHALL:

"DEAR SIR,—I am Maude Graham, and you bought my old home, Spring Farm, and it nearly broke my own and mamma's heart to have it sold. I don't blame you much now for buying it, but I did once, and I said some hard things about you to Archie More, your nephew, which he may repeat to you. But I was angry then at him and everybody, and I am sorry that I said them. I am only eighteen and very poor, but I shall be rich some day,—I am sure of it,—and able to buy Spring Farm, and I want you to keep it for me and not sell it to any one else. It may be years, but the day will come when I shall have the money of my own. Will you keep the place till then? I think I shall be happier and have more courage to work if you write and say you will.

"Yours truly, "MAUDE GRAHAM."

After this letter was sent and before she had reason

to expect an answer, Maude began to look for it, but none came, and the summer stretched on into August and the house at Spring Farm was shut up, for Mrs. Marshall-More was in Europe, and Maude's great anxiety was to find something to do for her own and her mother's support. Miss Nipe, the dressmaker, would give her a dollar a week while she was learning the trade, and this, with the three dollars per week which her brother John was earning in a grocery store, would be better than nothing, and she was seriously considering the matter, when a letter from her mother's brother, who lived "out West," as that portion of New York between the Cayuga Bridge and Buffalo was then called, changed the whole aspect of her affairs and forged the first link in the chain of her destiny. He could not take his sister and her children into his own large family, he wrote, but he had a plan to propose which, he thought, would prove advantageous to Maude, if her mother approved of it and would spare her from home. About six miles from his place was a school, which his daughter had taught for two years, but as she was about to be married, the position was open to Maude at four dollars a week and her board, provided she would take it.

"Maude is rather young, I know," Mr. Alling wrote in conclusion, "but no younger than Annie was when she began to teach, so her age need not stand in the way, if she chooses to come. The country will seem new and strange to her; there are still log-houses in the Bush district; indeed, the school-house is built of logs and the people ride in lumber wagons and are not like Bostonians or New Yorkers, but they are very kind,

and Maude will get accustomed to them in time. My advice is that she accept."

At first Mrs Graham refused to let her young daughter go so far from home, but Maude was persistent and eager. Log-houses and lumber wagons had no terrors for her. Indeed, they were rather attractions than otherwise, and fired her imagination, which began at once to people those houses of the olden time with the Kimbricks and the Websters, who had forsaken her so long. Four dollars a week seemed a fortune to her, and she would save it all, she said, and send it to her mother, who unwillingly consented at last and fortunately found a gentleman in town who was going to Chicago and would take charge of Maude as far as Canandaigua, where she was to leave the train and finish her journey by stage. But on the evening of the day before the one when Maude was to start, the gentleman received word that his son was very ill in Portland and required his immediate presence.

"I can go alone," Maude said courageously, though with a little sinking of the heart. "No one will harm me. Crossing the river at Albany is the worst, but I can do as the rest do, and after that I do not leave the car again until we reach Canandaigua."

"Don't feel so badly, mamma," she continued, winding her arms around her mother's neck and kissing away her tears. "I am not afraid, and don't you know how often you have said that God cared for the fatherless, and I am that, and I shall ask Him all the time I am in the car to take care of me, and He will answer. He will hear. I'm not a child. I am eighteen in the Bible and a great deal older than that since father died. Don't cry, darling mamma, and make it harder for

me. I must go to-morrow, for school begins next Monday."

So, for her daughter's sake, Mrs. Graham tried to be calm, and Maude's little hair trunk was packed with the garments, in each of which was folded a mother's prayer for the safety of her child; and the morning came, and the ticket was bought, and the conductor, with whom Mrs. Graham had a slight acquintance, promised to see to the little girl as far as Albany, where he would put her in charge of the man who took his place. Then the good-byes were said and the train moved on past the village on the hillside, past the dear old Spring Farm which she looked at through blinding tears as long as a tree-top was in sight, past the graveyard where her father was lying, past the meadows and woods and hills she loved so well, and on towards the new country and the new life of which she knew so little.

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE ROAD.

Those were the days when the Boston train westward-bound moved at a snail's pace compared with what it does now, and twenty-four hours instead of twelve were required for the trip from Merrivale to Canandaigua, so that the afternoon was drawing to a close when the cars stopped in Greenbush and the passengers alighted and rushed for the boat which was to take them across the river. This, and re-checking her

trunk, was what Maude dreaded the most, and her face was very white and scared and her heart beating violently as she followed the crowd, wondering if she should ever find her trunk among all that pile of baggage they were handling so roughly, and if it would be smashed to pieces when she did, and if she should get into the right car, or be carried somewhere else. She had lost sight of the conductor. Her head was beginning to ache, and there was a lump in her throat every time she thought of her mother and John, who would soon be taking their simple evening meal and talking of her.

"I wonder if I can bear it," she said to herself, as she sat in the cabin the very image of despair, clasping her hand-bag tightly and looking anxiously at the people around her as if in search of some friendly face, which she could trust.

She had heard so much before leaving home of wolves in sheep's or rather men's clothing, who infest railway trains, ready to pounce upon any unsuspecting girl who chanced to fall in their way, and had been so much afraid that some of the wolves might be on her train, lying in wait for her, that she had resolutely kept her head turned to the window all the time with a prayer in her heart that God would let no one speak to and frighten her. And thus far no one had spoken to her, except the conductor, but God must have deserted her now, for just as they were reaching the opposite shore, a gentleman, who had been watching her ever since she crouched down in the shadowy corner, and who had seen her wipe the tears away more than once, came up to her and said, "Are you alone, and can I do anything for you?"

"Yes,—no; oh, I don't know," Maude gasped as she clutched her bag, in which was her purse, more tightly, and looked up at the face above her.

It was such a pleasant face, and the voice was so kind and reassuring, that she forgot the wolves and might have given him her bag, purse, check and all, if the conductor had not just then appeared and taken her in charge. Lifting his hat politely the stranger walked away, while Maude went to identify her trunk.

"Will you take a sleeper?" the conductor asked.

And she replied: "Oh, no. I can't afford that."

So he found her a whole seat in the common car, and telling her he would speak of her to the new conductor, bade her good-bye, and she was left alone.

Very nervously she watched her fellow passengers as they came hurrying in,—men, mostly, it seemed to her,—rough-looking men, too, for there had been a horse-race that day at a point on the Harlem road, and they were returning from it. Occasionally some one of them stopped and looked at the girl in black, who sat so straight and still, with her hand-bag held down upon the vacant seat beside her as if to keep it intact. But no one offered to take it, and Maude breathed more freely as the crowded train moved slowly from the depot. After a little the new conductor came and spoke to her and looked at her ticket and went out, and then she was really alone. New England, with its rocks and hills and mountains, was behind her. Mother, and John, and home were far away, and the lump in her throat grew larger, and there crept over her such a sense of dreariness and home-sickness, that she would have cried outright if she dared to. There were only six women in the car besides herself. All the rest were

wolves ; she felt sure of that, they talked and laughed so loud, and spit so much tobacco-juice. They were so different from the stranger on the boat, she thought, wondering who he was and where he had gone. How pleasantly he had spoken to her, and how she wished —— She got no further, for a voice said to her :

" Can I sit by you ? Every other seat is taken."

" Yes, oh, yes. I am so glad," Maude exclaimed involuntarily in her delight at recognizing the stranger, and springing to her feet she offered him the seat next to the window.

" Oh, no," he said, with a smile which would have won the confidence of any girl. " Keep that yourself. You will be more comfortable there. Are you going to ride all night ?"

" Yes, I am going to Canandaigua," she replied.

" To Canandaigua !" he repeated, looking at her a little curiously ; but he asked no more questions then, and busied himself with adjusting his bag and his large traveling shawl, which last he put on the back of the seat, more behind Maude than himself.

Then he took out a magazine, while Maude watched him furtively, thinking him the finest looking man she had ever seen, except her father, of whom, in his manner, he reminded her a little. Not nearly so old, certainly, as her father, and not young like Archie either, for there were a few threads of grey in his mustache and in his brown hair which had a trick of curling slightly at the ends under his soft felt hat. Who was he ? she wondered. The initials on his satchel were " M. G.," but that told her nothing. How she hoped he was going as far as she was, she felt so safe with him,

and at last, as the darkness increased and he shut up his book, she ventured to ask :

"Are you going far?"

"Yes," he replied, with a twinkle of humor in his blue eyes, "and if none of these men get out, I am afraid I shall have to claim your forbearance all night, but I will make myself as small as possible. Look," and with a laugh he drew himself close to the arm of the seat, leaving quite a space between them ; but he did not tell her that he had engaged a berth in the sleeper, which he had abandoned when he found her there alone, with that set of roughs, whose character he knew.

"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these ye have done it unto me," would surely be said to him some day, for he was always giving the cup of water, even to those who did not know they were thirsting until after they had drunk of what he offered them. Once he brought Maude some water in a little glass tumbler, which he took from his satchel, and once he offered her an apple which she declined lest she should seem too forward ; then, as the hours crept on and her eyelids began to droop, he folded his shawl carefully and made her let him put it behind her head, suggesting that she remove her hat, as she would rest more comfortably without it.

"Now sleep quietly," he said, and as if there were something mesmeric in his voice, Maude went to sleep at once and dreamed she was at home with her mother beside her, occasionally fixing the pillow under her head and covering her with something which added to her comfort.

It was the stranger's light overcoat which, as the Sep-

tember night grew cold and chill, he put over the girl, whose upturned face he had studied as intently as she had studied his. About seven o'clock the conductor came in, lantern in hand, and as its rays fell upon the stranger, he said, "Hello, Gordon, you here? I thought you were in the sleeper. On guard, I see, as usual. Who is the lamb this time?"

"I don't know; do you?" the man called Gordon replied.

"No," the conductor said, turning his light full upon Maude; then, "Why, it's a little girl the Boston conductor put in my care; but she's safer with you. Comes from the mountains somewhere, I believe. Guess she is going to seek her fortune. She ought to find it, with that face. Isn't she pretty?" and he glanced admiringly at the sweet young face now turned to one side, with one hand under the flushed cheek and the short rings of damp hair curling round her forehead.

"Yes, very," Gordon replied, moving uneasily and finally holding a newspaper between Maude and the conductor's lantern, for it did not seem right to him that any eyes except those of a near friend should take this advantage of a sleeping girl.

The conductor passed on, and then Gordon fell asleep until they reached a way station, where the sudden stopping of a train roused him to consciousness, and a moment after he was confronted by a young man, who, at sight of him, stopped short and exclaimed:

"Max Gordon, as I live! I've hunted creation over for you and given you up. Where have you been and why weren't you at Long Branch, as you said you'd be when you wrote me to join you there?"

"Got tired of it, you were so long coming, so I went to the Adirondacks with Archie."

"Did you bring me any letters?" Max replied, and his friend continued, "Yes, a cart load. Six, any way," and he began to take them from his side pocket. "One, two, three, four, five; there's another somewhere. Oh, here 'tis," he said, taking out the sixth, which looked rather soiled and worn. "I suppose it's for you," he continued, "although it's directed to Mr. Max Marshall, Esq., and is in a school-girl's handwriting. It came long ago, and we chaps puzzled over it a good while; then, as no one appeared to claim it, and it was mailed at Merrivale, where your sister spends her summers, I ventured to bring it with the rest. If you were not such a saint I'd say you had been imposing a false name upon some innocent country girl, and, by George, I believe she's here now with your ulster over her! Running off with her, eh? What will Miss Raynor say?" he went on, as his eyes fell upon Maude, who just then stirred in her sleep and murmured softly, "Our Father, who art in Heaven."

She was at home in her little white-curtained bedroom, kneeling with her mother and saying her nightly prayer, and, involuntarily, both the young men bowed their heads as if receiving a benediction.

"I think, Dick, that your vile insinuation is answered," Max said, and Dick rejoined, "Yes, I beg your pardon. Under your protection, I s'pose. Well, she's safe; but I must be finding that berth of mine. Will see you in the morning. Good-night."

He left the car, while Max Gordon tried to read his letters as best he could by the dim light near him. One was from his sister, one from Archie, three on

business, while the last puzzled him a little, and he held it awhile as if uncertain as to his right to open it.

"It must be for me," he said at last, and breaking the seal he read Maude's letter to him, unconscious that Maude was sleeping there beside him.

Indeed, he had never heard of Maude Graham before, and had scarcely given a thought to the former owners of Spring Farm. His sister had a mortgage upon it; the man was dead; the place must be sold, and Mrs. More asked him to buy it; that was all he knew when he bid it off.

"Poor little girl," he said to himself. "If I had known about you, I don't believe I'd have bought the place. There was no necessity to foreclose, I am sure; but it was just like Angie; and what must this Maude think of me not to have answered her letter. I am so sorry;" and his sorrow manifested itself in an increased attention to the girl, over whom he adjusted his ulster more carefully, for the air in the car was growing very damp and chilly.

It was broad daylight when Maude awoke, starting up with a smile on her face and reminding Max of some lovely child when first aroused from sleep.

"Why, I have slept all night," she exclaimed, as she tossed back her wavy hair; "and you have given me your shawl and ulster, too," she added, with a blush which made her face, as Max thought, the prettiest he had ever seen.

Who was she, he wondered, and once he thought to ask her the question direct; then he tried by a little *finessing* to find out who she was and where she came from, but Maude's mother had so strongly impressed it upon her not to be at all communicative to strangers,

that she was wholly non-committal even while suspecting his design, and when at last Canandaigua was reached he knew no more of her history than when he first saw her, white and trembling on the boat. She was going to take the Genesee stage, she said, and expected her uncle to meet her at Oak Corners in Richland.

"Why, that is funny," he said. "If it were not that a carriage is to meet me, I should still be your fellow-traveler, for my route lies that way."

And then he did ask her uncle's name. She surely might tell him so much, Maude thought, and replied:

"Captain James Alling, my mother's brother."

Her name was not Alling, then, and reflecting that now he knew who her uncle was he could probably trace her, Max saw her into the stage, and taking her ungloved hand in his held it perhaps a trifle longer than he would have done if it had not been so very soft and white and pretty, and rested so confidingly in his, while she thanked him for his kindness. Then the stage drove away, while he stood watching it, and wondering why the morning was not quite so bright as it had been an hour ago, and why he had not asked her point-blank who she was, or had been so stupid as not to give her his card.

"Max Gordon, you certainly are getting into your dotage," he said to himself. "A man of your age to be so interested in a little unknown girl! What would Grace say? Poor Grace. I wonder if I shall find her improved, and why she has buried herself in this part of the country."

As he entered the hotel a thought of Maude Graham's

letter came to his mind, and calling for pen and paper he dashed off the following :

"CANANDAIGUA, September —, 18—.

"MISS MAUDE GRAHAM,—Your letter did not reach me until last night, when it was brought me by a friend. I have not been in Boston since the first of last July, and the reason it was not forwarded to me is that you addressed it wrong, and they were in doubt as to its owner. My name is Gordon, not Marshall, as you supposed, and I am very sorry for your sake and your mother's that I ever bought Spring Farm. Had I known what I do now I should not have done so. But it is too late, and I can only promise to keep it as you wish until you can buy it back. You are a brave little girl and I will sell it to you cheap. I should very much like to know you, and when I am again in Merrivale I shall call upon you and your mother, if she will let me.

"With kind regards to her I am

"Yours truly,

"MAX GORDON."

The letter finished, he folded and directed it to Miss Maude Graham, Merrivale, Mass., while she for whom it was intended was huddled up in one corner of the crowded stage and going on as fast as four fleet horses could take her towards Oak Corners and the friends awaiting her there. Thus strangely do two lives sometimes meet and cross each other and then drift widely apart ; but not forever, in this instance, let us hope.

CHAPTER V.

MISS RAYNOR.

About a mile from Laurel Hill, a little village in Richland, was an eminence, or plateau, from the top of which one could see for miles the rich, well-cultivated farms in which the town abounded, the wooded hills and the deep gorges all slanting down to a common centre, the pretty little lake, lying as in the bottom of a basin, with its clear waters sparkling in the sunshine. And here, just on the top of the plateau, where the view was the finest, an eccentric old bachelor, Paul Raynor, had a few years before our story opens, built himself a home after his own peculiar ideas of architecture, but which, when finished and furnished, was a most delightful place, especially in the summer when the flowers and shrubs, of which there was a great profusion, were in blossom, and the wide lawn in front of the house was like a piece of velvet. Here for two years Paul Raynor had lived quite *en prince*, and then, sickening with what he knew to be a fatal disease, he had sent for his invalid sister Grace, who came and stayed with him to the last, finding after he was dead that all his property had been left to her, with a request that she would make the Cedars, as the place was called, her home for a portion of the time at least. And so, though city bred and city born, Grace had staid on for nearly a year, leading a lonely life, for she knew but few of her neighbors, while her crippled condition prevented her from mingling at all in the society she was so well fitted to adorn. As

the reader will have guessed, Grace Raynor was the girl, or rather woman, for she was over thirty now, to whom Max Gordon had devoted the years of his early manhood, in the vain hope that some time she would be cured and become his wife. A few days before the one appointed for her bridal she had been thrown from her horse and had injured her spine so badly that for months she suffered such agony that her beautiful hair turned white ; then the pain ceased suddenly, but left her no power to move her lower limbs, and she had never walked since and never would. But through all the long years Max had clung to her with a devotion born first of his intense love for her and later of his sense of honor which would make him loyal to her even to the grave. Knowing how domestic he was in his tastes and how happy he would be with wife and children, Grace had insisted that he should leave her and seek some other love. But his answer was always the same. "No, Grace, I am bound to you just as strongly as if the clergyman had made us one, and will marry you any day you will say the word. Your lameness is nothing so long as your soul is left untouched, and your face, too," he would sometimes add, kissing fondly the lovely face which, with each year, seemed to grow lovelier, and from which the snowy hair did not in the least detract.

But Grace knew better than to inflict herself upon him, and held fast to her resolve, even while her whole being went out to him with an intense longing for his constant love and companionship. Especially was this the case at the Cedars, where she found herself very lonely, notwithstanding the beauty of the place and its situation.

"If he asks me again, shall I refuse?" she said to herself on the September morning when Maude Graham was alighting from the dusty stage at Oak Corners, two miles away, and the carriage sent for Max was only an hour behind.

How pretty she was in the dainty white dress, with a shawl of scarlet wool wrapped around her, as she sat in her wheel chair on the broad piazza, which commanded a view of the lake and the green hills beyond. Not fresh and bright and glowing as Maude, who was like an opening rose with the early dew upon it, but more like a pale water lily just beginning to droop, though very sweet and lovely still. There was a faint tinge of color in her cheek as she leaned her head against the cushions of her chair and wondered if she should find Max the same ardent lover as ever, ready to take her to his arms at any cost, or had he, during the past year, seen some other face fairer and younger than her own.

"I shall know in a moment if he is changed ever so little," she thought, and although she did not mean to be selfish, and would at any moment have given him up and made no sign, there was a throb of pain in her heart as she tried to think what life would be without Max to love her. "I should die," she whispered, "and please God, I shall die before many years and leave my boy free."

He was her boy still, just as young and handsome as he had been thirteen years ago, when he lifted her so tenderly from the ground and she felt his tears upon her forehead as she writhed in her fearful pain. And now when at last he came and put his arms around her and took her face between his hands and looked fondly into it as he questioned her of her health, she felt that

he was unchanged, and thanked her Father for it. He was delighted with everything, and sat by her until after lunch, which was served on the piazza, and asked her of her life there and the people in the neighborhood, and finally if she knew of a Capt. Alling.

"Capt. Alling," she replied; "why, yes. He lives on a farm about two miles from here and we buy our honey from him. A very respectable man, I think, although I have no acquaintance with the family. Why do you ask?"

"Oh, nothing; only there was a girl on the train with me who told me she was his niece," Max answered indifferently, with a vigorous puff at his cigar, which Grace always insisted he should smoke in her presence. "She was very pretty and very young. I should like to see her again," he added, more to himself than to Grace, who, without knowing why, felt suddenly as if a cloud had crept across her sky.

Jealousy had no part in Grace's nature, nor was she jealous of this young, pretty girl whom Max would like to see again, and to prove that she was not she asked many questions about her and said she would try and find out who she was, and that she presumed she had come to attend the wedding of Capt. Alling's daughter, who was soon to be married. This seemed very probable, and no more was said of Maude until the afternoon of the day following, which was Sunday. Then, after Max returned from church and they were seated at dinner he said abruptly, "I saw her again."

"Saw whom?" Grace asked, and he replied, "My little girl of the train. She was at church with her uncle's family. A rather ordinary lot I thought them,

but she looked as sweet as a June pink. You know they are my favorite flowers."

"Yes," Grace answered slowly, while again a breath of cold air seemed to blow over her and make her draw her shawl more closely around her.

But Max did not suspect it, and pared a peach for her and helped her to grapes, and after dinner wheeled her for an hour on the broad plateau, stooping over her once and caressing her white hair, which he told her was very becoming, and saying no more of the girl seen in church that morning. The Allings had been late and the rector was reading the first lesson when they came in, father and mother and two healthy, buxom girls, followed by Maude, who, in her black dress looked taller and slimmer than he had thought her in the car, and prettier, too, with the brilliant color on her cheeks and the sparkle in the eyes which met his with such glad surprise in them that he felt something stir in his heart different from anything he had felt since he and Grace were young. The Allings occupied a pew in front of him and on the side, so that he could look at and study Maude's face, which he did far more than he listened to the sermon. And she knew he was looking at her, too, and always blushed when she met his earnest gaze. As they were leaving the church he managed to get near her, and said, "I hope you are quite well after your long journey, Miss ——."

"Graham," she answered, involuntarily, but so low that he only caught the first syllable and thought that she said *Grey*.

She was Miss Grey, then, and with this bit of information he was obliged to be content. Twice during the week he rode past the Alling house, hoping to see the

eyes which had flashed so brightly upon him on the porch of the church, and never dreaming of the hot tears of homesickness they were weeping in the log school house of the Bush district, where poor Maude was so desolate and lonely. If he had, he might, perhaps, have gone there and tried to comfort her, so greatly was he interested in her, and so much was she in his mind.

He stayed at the Cedars several days, and then finding it a little tiresome said good-bye to Grace and went his way again, leaving her with a vague consciousness that something had come between them; a shadow no larger than a man's hand, it is true, but still a shadow, and as she watched him going down the walk she whispered sadly, "Max is slipping from me."

CHAPTER VI.

THE SCHOOL MISTRESS.

THE setting sun of a raw January afternoon was shining into the dingy school-room where Maude sat by the iron-rusted box stove, with her feet on the hearth, reading a note which had been brought to her just before the close of school by a man who had been to the post-office in the village at the foot of the lake. It was nearly four months since she first crossed the threshold of the log school-house, taking in at a glance the whole dreariness of her surroundings, and feeling for the moment that she could not endure it. But she was somewhat accustomed to it now, and not half so much afraid

of the tall girls and boys, her scholars, as she had been at first, while the latter were wholly devoted to her and not a little proud of their "young school ma'am," as they called her. Everybody was kind to her, and she had not found "boarding round" so very dreadful after all, for the fatted calf was always killed for her, and the best dishes brought out, while it was seldom that she was called upon to share her sleeping room with more than one member of the family. And still there was ever present with her a longing for her mother and for Johnnie and a life more congenial to her tastes. Dreaming was out of the question now, and the book which was to make her famous and buy back the old home seemed very far in the future. Just how large a portion of her thoughts was given to Max Gordon it was difficult to say. She had felt a thrill of joy when she saw him in church, and a little proud, too, it may be, of his notice of her. Very minutely her cousins had questioned her with regard to her acquaintance with him, deploring her stupidity in not having ascertained who he was. A relative, most likely, of Miss Raynor, in whose pew he sat, they concluded, and they told their cousin of the lady at the Cedars, Grace Raynor, who could not walk a step, but was wheeled in a chair, sometimes by a maid and sometimes by a man. The lady *par excellence* of the neighborhood she seemed to be, and Maude found herself greatly interested in her and in everything pertaining to her. Twice she had been through the grounds, which were open to the public, and had seen Grace both times in the distance, once sitting in her chair upon the piazza, and once being wheeled in the woods by her man-servant, Tom. But beyond this she had not advanced, and nothing could be

farther from her thoughts than the idea that she would ever be anything to the lady of the Cedars. Max Gordon's letter had been forwarded to her from Merrivale, but had created no suspicion in her mind that he and her friend of the train were one. She had thought it a little strange that he should have been in Canandaigua the very day that she arrived there, and wished she might have seen him, but the truth never dawned upon her until some time in December, when her mother wrote to her that he had called to see them, expressing much regret at Maude's absence, and when told where she was and when she went, exclaiming with energy, as he sprang to his feet, "Why, madam, your daughter was with me in the train,—a little blue-eyed, brown-haired girl in black, who said she was Captain Alling's niece."

"He seemed greatly excited," Mrs. Graham wrote, "and regretted that he did not know who you were. He got an idea somehow that your name was *Grey*, and said he received your letter with you asleep beside him. He is a splendid looking man, with the pleasantest eyes and the kindest voice I ever heard or saw."

"Ye-es," Maude said slowly, as she recalled the voice which had spoken so kindly to her, and the eyes which had looked so pleasantly into her own. "And that was Max Gordon! He was going to the Cedars, and Miss Raynor is the girl for whom he has lived single all these years. Oh-h!"

She was conscious of a vague regret that her stranger friend was the betrothed husband of Grace Raynor, who, at that very time, was thinking of her and fighting down a feeling as near to jealousy as it was possible for her to harbor. In the same mail with Maude's let-

ter from her mother there had come to the Cedars one from Max, who said that he had discovered who was his *compagnon da voyage.*

"She is teaching somewhere in your town," he wrote "and I judge is not very happy there. Can't you do something for her, Grace? It has occurred to me that to have a girl like her about you would do you a great deal of good. We are both getting on in years, and need something young to keep us from growing old, and you might make her your companion. She is very pretty, with a soft, cultivated voice, and must be a good reader. Think of it, and if you decide to do it, inquire for her at Captain Alling's. Her name is Maude Graham. Yours lovingly,

"MAX."

This was Max's letter, which Grace read as she sat in her cosy sitting-room with every luxury around her which money could buy, from the hot house roses on the stand beside her to the costly rug on which her chair was standing in the ruddy glow of the cheerful grate fire. And as she read it she felt again the cold breath which had swept over her when Max was telling her of the young girl who had interested him so much. And in a way Grace, too, had interested herself in Maude, and through her maid had ascertained who she was, and that she was teaching in the southern part of the town. And there her interest had ceased. But it revived again on the receipt of Max's letter and she said, "I must see this girl first and know what she is like. A woman can judge a woman better than a man, but I wish Max had not said what he did about our growing old. Am I greatly changed, I wonder?"

She could manage her chair herself in the house, and wheeling it before a long mirror, she leaned eagerly forward and examined the face reflected there. A pale, sweet face, framed in masses of snow white hair, which rather added to its youthful appearance than detracted from it, although she did not think so. She had been so proud of her golden hair, and the bitterest tears she had ever shed had been for the change in it.

"It's my hair," she whispered sadly,—"hair which belongs to a woman of sixty, rather than thirty-three, and there is a tired look about my eyes and mouth. Yes, I am growing old, oh, Max——," and the slender fingers were pressed over the beautiful blue eyes where the tears came so fast. "Yes, I'll see the girl," she said, "and if I like her face, I'll take her to please him."

She knew there was to be an illumination on Christmas Eve in the church on Laurel Hill, and that Maude Graham was to sing a Christmas anthem alone.

I'll go, and hear, and see," she decided, and when the evening came Grace was there in the Raynor pew listening while Maude Graham sang, her bright face glowing with excitement and her full, rich voice rising higher and higher, clearer and clearer, until it filled the church as it had never been filled before, and thrilled every nerve of the woman watching her so intently.

"Yes, she is pretty and good, too; I cannot be deceived in that face," she said to herself, and when, after the services were over and Maude came up the aisle past the pew where she was sitting, she put out her hand and said, "Come here, my dear, and let me thank you for the pleasure you have given me. You have a wonderful voice and some time you must come

and sing to me. I am Miss Raynor, and you are Maude Graham."

This was their introduction to each other, and that night Maud dreamed of the lovely face which had smiled upon her, and the voice, which had spoken so kindly to her.

Two weeks afterwards Grace's note was brought to her and she read it with her feet upon the stove hearth and the low January sun shining in upon her.

Miss Raynor wanted her for a companion and friend, to read and sing to and soothe her in the hours of languor and depression, which were many.

"I am lonely," she wrote, "and, as you know, wholly incapacitated from mingling with the world, and I want some one with me different from my maid. Will you come to me, Miss Graham? I will try to make you happy. If money is any object I will give you twice as much as you are now receiving, whatever that may be. Think of it and let me know your decision soon.

"Yours very truly,

"GRACE RAYNOR.

"Oh," Maude cried. "Eight dollars a week and a home at the Cedars, instead of four dollars a week and boarding around. Of course I will go, though not till my present engagement expires. This will not be until some time in March," and she began to wonder if she could endure it so long, and, now that the pressure was lifting, how she had ever borne it at all.

But whatever may be the nature of our surroundings, time passes quickly, and leaves behind a sense of nearly as much pleasure as pain, and when at last the closing day of school came, it was with genuine feelings of re-

gret that Maude said good-bye to the pupils she had learned to love and the patrons who had been so kind to her.

CHAPTER VII.

AT THE CEDARS.

It had cost Grace a struggle before she decided to take Maude as her companion, and she had been driven past the little log house among the hills and through the Bush district, that she might judge for herself of the girl's surroundings. The day was raw and blustering, and great banks of snow were piled against the fences and lay heaped up in the road unbroken save by a foot path made by the children's feet.

"And it is through this she walks in the morning, and then sits all day in that dingy room. I don't believe I should like it," Grace thought, and that night she wrote to Maude, offering her a situation with herself.

And now, on a lovely morning in April, when the crocuses and snowdrops were just beginning to blossom, she sat waiting for her, wondering if she had done well or ill for herself. She had seen Maude and talked with her, for the latter had called at the Cedars and spent an hour or more, and Grace had learned much from her of her former life and of Spring Farm, which she was going to buy back. Max's name, however, was not mentioned, although he was constantly in the minds of both, and Grace was wondering if he

would come oftener to the Cedars if Maude were there. She could not be jealous of the girl, and yet the idea had taken possession of her that she was bringing her to the Cedars for Max rather than for herself, and this detracted a little from her pleasure when she began to fit up the room her companion was to occupy. Such a pretty room it was, just over her own, with a bow window looking across the valley where the lake lay sleeping, and on to the hills and the log school-house which, had it been higher, might have been seen above the woods which surrounded it. A room all pink and white, with roses and lilies everywhere, and a bright fire in the grate before which a willow chair was standing and a Maltese kitten sleeping when Maude was ushered into it by Jane, Miss Raynor's maid.

"Oh, it is so lovely," Maude thought, as she looked about her, wondering if it were not a dream from which she should presently awake.

But it was no dream, and as the days went on it came to be real to her, and she was conscious of a deep and growing affection for the woman who was always so kind to her and who treated her like an equal rather than a hired companion. Together they read and talked of the books which Maude liked best, and gradually Grace learned of the dream life Maude had led before coming to Richland, and of the people who had deserted her among the hills, but who in this more congenial atmosphere came trooping back, legions of them, and crowding her brain until she had to tell of them, and of the two lives she was living, the ideal and the real. She was sitting on a stool at Grace's feet, with her face flushed with excitement as she talked of the Kimbricks, and Websters, and Angeline Mason, who

were all with her now as they had been at home, and all as real to her as Miss Raynor was herself. Laying her hand upon the girl's brown curls, Grace said, half laughingly, "And so you are going to write a book. Well, I believe all girls have some such aspiration. I had it once, but it was swallowed up by a stronger, deeper feeling, which absorbed my whole being."

Here Grace's voice trembled a little as she leaned back in her chair and seemed to be thinking. Then, rousing herself, she asked suddenly, "How old are you, Maude?"

"Nineteen this month," was Maude's reply, and Grace went on: "Just my age when the great sorrow came. That was fourteen years ago next June. I am thirty-three, and Max is thirty-seven."

She said this last more to herself than to Maude, who started slightly, for this was the first time his name had been mentioned since she came to the Cedars.

After a moment Grace continued: "I have never spoken to you of Mr. Gordon, although I know you have met him. You were with him on the train from Albany to Canandaigua; he told me of you."

"He did!" Maude exclaimed, with a ring in her voice which made Grace's heart beat a little faster, but she went calmly on:

"Yes; he was greatly interested in you, although he did not then know who you were; but he knows now. He is coming here soon. We have been engaged ever since I was seventeen and he was twenty-one; fourteen years ago the 20th of June we were to have been married. Everything was ready; my bridal dress and veil had been brought home, and I tried them on one morning to see how I looked in them. I was beautiful,

Max said, and I think he told the truth ; for a woman may certainly know whether the face she sees in the mirror be pretty or not, and the picture I saw was very fair, while he, who stood beside me, was splendid in his young manhood. How I loved him ; more, I fear, than I loved God, and for that I was punished,—oh, so dreadfully punished. We rode together that afternoon, Max and I, and I was wondering if there were ever a girl as happy as myself, and pitying the women I met because they had no Max beside them, when suddenly my horse reared, frightened by a dog, and I was thrown upon a sharp curb-stone. Of the months of agony which followed I cannot tell you, except that I prayed to die and so be rid of pain. The injury was in my spine, and I have never walked in all the fourteen years since. Max has been true to me, and would have married me had I allowed it. But I cannot burden him with a cripple, and sometimes I wish, or think I do, that he would find some one younger, fairer than I am, on whom to lavish his love. He would make a wife so happy. And yet it would be hard for me, I love him so much. Oh, Max ; I don't believe he knows how dear he is to me."

She was crying softly now, and Maude was crying, too ; and as she smoothed the snow-white hair and kissed the brow on which lines were beginning to show, she said :

"He will never find a sweeter face than yours."

To her Max Gordon now was only the betrothed husband of her mistress, and still she found herself looking forward to his visit with a keen interest, wondering what he would say to her, and if his eyes would kindle at sight of her as they had done when she saw him in

the church at Laurel Hill. He was to come on the 20th, the anniversary of the day which was to have been his bridal day, and when the morning came, Grace said to Maude :

"I'd like to wear my wedding gown ; do you think it would be too much like Dickens' Miss Haversham ?"

"Yes, yes," Maude answered, quickly, feeling that faded satin and lace of fourteen years' standing would be sadly out of place. "You are lovely in those light gowns you wear so much," she said.

So Grace wore the dress which Maude selected for her ; a soft, woolen fabric of a creamy tint, with a blue shawl, the color of her eyes, thrown around her, and a bunch of June pinks, Max's favorite flowers, at her belt. Then, when she was ready, Maude wheeled her out to the piazza, where they waited for their visitor.

CHAPTER VIII.

MAX AT THE CEDARS.

THE train was late that morning and lunch was nearly ready before they saw the open carriage turn into the grounds, with Max standing up in it and waving his hat to them.

"Oh, Maude," Grace said, "I would give all I am worth to go and meet him. Isn't he handsome and grand, my Max !" she continued, as if she would assert her right to him and hold it against the world.

But Maude did not hear her, for as Max alighted from

the carriage and came eagerly forward, she stole away, feeling that it was not for her to witness the meeting of the lovers.

"Dear Max, you are not changed, are you?" Grace cried, extending her arms to him, with the effort to rise which she involuntarily made so often, and which was pitiful to see.

"Changed, darling? How could I change in less than a year?" Max answered, as he drew her face down to his bosom and stroked her hair.

Grace was not thinking of a physical change. Indeed she did not know what she did mean, for she was not herself conscious how strong an idea had taken possession of her that she was losing Max. But with him there beside her, her morbid fears vanished, and letting her head rest upon his arm, she said:

"I don't know, Max, only things come back to me to-day and I am thinking of fourteen years ago and that I am fourteen years older than I was then, and crippled and helpless and faded, while you are young as ever. Oh, Max, stay by me till the last. It will not be for long. I am growing so tired and sad."

Grace hardly knew what she was saying, or why, as she said it, Maude Graham's face, young and fair and fresh, seemed to come between herself and Max, any more than he could have told why he was so vaguely wondering what had become of the girl in black, whom he had seen in the distance quite as soon as he had seen the woman in the chair. During his journey Grace and Maude had been pretty equally in his mind, and he was conscious of the feeling that the Cedars held an added attraction for him because the latter was there; and now, when he began to have a faint perception of

Grace's meaning, though he did not associate it with Maude, he felt half guilty because he had for a moment thought any place where Grace was could be made pleasanter than she could make it. Taking her face between his hands he looked at it more closely, noticing with a pang that it had grown thinner and paler and that there were lines about the eyes and the mouth, while the blue veins stood out full and distinct upon the forehead. Was she slowly fading? he asked himself, resolving that nothing should be lacking on his part to prove that she was just as dear to him as in the days when they were young and the future bright before them. He did not even speak of Maude until he saw her in the distance, trying to train a refractory honeysuckle over a tall frame. Then he said :

"Is that Miss Graham, and do you like her as well as ever?"

"Yes, better and better every day," was Grace's reply. "It was a little awkward at first to have a stranger with me continually, but I am accustomed to her now, and couldn't part with her. She is very dear to me," she continued, while Max listened and watched the girl, moving about so gracefully, and once showing her arms to the elbows as her wide sleeves fell back in her efforts to reach the top of the frame.

"She oughtn't to do that," Grace said. "She is not tall enough. Go and help her, Max," and nothing loth, Max went along the terrace to where Maude was standing, her face flushed with exercise as she gave him her hand and said, "Good-morning, Mr. Gordon. I am Maude Graham. Perhaps you remember me."

"How could I forget you," sprang to Max's lips, but he said instead, "Good-morning, Miss Graham. I have

come to help you. Miss Raynor thinks it is bad for your heart to reach so high."

Maude could have told him that her heart had not beaten one half as fast while reaching up as it was beating now, with him there beside her holding the vine while she tied it to its place, his hand touching hers and his arm once thrown out to keep her from falling as she stumbled backward. It took a long time to fix that honeysuckle, and Max had leisure to tell Maude of a call made upon her mother only a week before.

"Spring Farm is looking its loveliest, with the roses and lilies in bloom," he said, "and Angie, my sister, is enjoying it immensely. She has filled the house with her city friends and has made some changes, of which I think you would approve. Your mother does, but when she wanted to cut down that apple tree in the corner I would not let her do it. You remember it, don't you ?"

"Oh, Mr. Gordon," Maude exclaimed, "don't let her touch that tree. My play-house was under it, and there the people used to come to see me."

He did not know who the people were, for he had never heard of Maude's brain children,—the Kimbricks and the Websters,—and could hardly have understood if he had ; but Maude's voice was very pathetic and the eyes which looked at him were full of tears, moving him strangely and making him very earnest in his manner as he assured her that every tree and shrub should be kept intact for her.

"You know you are going to buy it back," he continued laughingly, as they walked slowly toward the house where Grace was waiting to be taken in to lunch.

"Yes, and I shall do it, too. You will see ; it may be

many years, but I trust you to keep it for me," Maude said, and he replied, "You may trust me with anything, and I shall not disappoint you."

The talk by the honeysuckle was one of many which took place while Max was at the Cedars, for Grace was too unselfish to keep him chained to her side, and insisted that he should enjoy what there was to enjoy in the way of rides and drives in the neighborhood, and as she could not often go with him she sent Maude in her stead, even though she knew the danger there was in it, for she was not insensible to Max's admiration for the girl, or Maude's interest in him.

"If Max is true to me to the last, and he will be, it is all I ask," she thought, and gave no sign of the ache in her heart, when she saw him going from her with Maude and felt that it was in more senses than one. "If he is happy, I am happy, too, she would say to herself, as she sat alone hour after hour, while Max and Maude explored the country in every direction.

Sometimes they drove together, but oftener rode, for Maude was a fine horsewoman and never looked better than when on horseback, in the becoming habit which Grace had given her and which fitted her admirably. Together they went through the pleasant Richland woods, where the grass was like a mossy carpet beneath their horses' hoofs, and the singing of the birds and the brook was the only sound which broke the summer stillness, then again they galloped over the hills and round the lake, and once through the Bush district, up to the little log house which Max expressed a wish to see. It was past the hour for school. Teacher and scholars had gone home, and tying their horses to the fence they went into the dingy room and sat down side by side

upon one of the wooden benches, and just where a ray of sunlight fell upon Maude's face and hair, for she had removed her hat and was fanning herself with it. She was very beautiful, with that halo around her head, Max thought, as he sat watching and listening to her, as in answer to his question, "How could you endure it here?" she told him of her terrible homesickness during the first weeks of her life as a school-teacher.

"I longed so for mother and Johnnie," she said, "and was always thinking of them, and the dear old home, and—and sometimes—of you, too, before I received your letter."

"Of me!" Max said, moving a little nearer to her, while she went on:

"Yes, I've wanted to tell you how angry I was because you bought our home. I wrote you something about it, you remember, but I did not tell you half how bitter I felt. I know now you were not to blame, but I did not think so then, and said some harsh things of you to Archie; perhaps he told you. I said he might. Did he?"

"No," Max answered, playing idly with the riding whip Maude held in her hand. "No, Archie has only told me pleasant things of you. I think he is very fond of you," and he looked straight into Maude's face, waiting for her reply.

It was surely nothing to him whether Archie were fond of Maude, or she were fond of Archie, and yet her answer was very reassuring and lifted from his heart a little shadow resting there.

"Yes," Maude said, without the slightest change in voice or expression. "Archie and I are good friends. I have known him and played with him, and quarreled

with him ever since I was a child, so that he seems more like a brother than anything else."

"Oh, ye-es," Max resumed, with a feeling of relief, as he let his arm rest on the high desk behind her, so that if she moved ever so little it would touch her.

There was in Max's mind no thought of love-making. Indeed, he did not know that he was thinking of anything except the lovely picture the young girl made with the sunlight playing on her hair and the shy look in her eyes as, in a pretty, apologetic way she told him how she had disliked him and credited him with all the trouble which had come upon them since her father's death.

"Why, I thought I hated you," she said with energy.

"Hated me! Oh, Maude, you don't hate me now, I hope;—I could not bear that," Max said, letting the whip fall and taking Maude's hand in his, as he said again, "You don't hate me now?"

"No, no; oh, no. I—oh, Mr. Gordon," Maude began, but stopped abruptly, startled by something in the eyes of the man, who had never called her Maude before, and whose voice had never sounded as it did now, making every nerve thrill with a sudden joy, all the sweeter, perhaps, because she knew it must not be.

Wrenching her hand from his and springing to her feet she said, "It is growing late, and Miss Raynor is waiting for us. Have you forgotten *her?*"

He had forgotten her for one delirious moment, but she came back to him with a throb of pain and self-reproach that he had allowed himself to swerve in the slightest degree from his loyalty to her.

"I am not a man, but a traitor," he said to himself,

as he helped Maude into her saddle and then vaulted into his own.

The ride home was a comparatively silent one, for both knew that they had not been quite true to the woman who welcomed them back so sweetly and asked so many questions about their ride and what they had seen. Poor Grace ; she did not in the least understand why Maude lavished so much attention upon her that evening, or why Max lingered longer than usual at her side, or why his voice was so tender and loving, when he at last said good-night and went to his own room, and the self-castigation which he knew awaited him there.

"I was a villain," he said, as he recalled that little episode in the school-house, when to have put his arm around Maude Graham and held her for a moment, would have been like heaven to him. "I was false to Grace, although I did not mean it, and, God helping me, I will never be so again." Then, as he remembered the expression of the eyes which had looked up so shyly at him, he said aloud, "Could I win her, were I free? But that is impossible. May God forgive me for the thought. Oh, why has Grace thrown her so much in my way? She surely is to blame for that, while I —— well, I am a fool, and a knave, and a sneak."

He called himself a great many hard names that night, and registered a vow that so long as Grace lived, and he said he hoped she would live forever, he would be true to her no matter how strong the temptation placed in his way. It was a fierce battle Max fought, but he came off conqueror, and the meeting between himself and Maude next morning was as natural as if to

neither of them had ever come a moment when they had a glimpse of the happiness which, under other circumstances, might perhaps have been theirs. Maude, too, had had her hours of remorse and contrition and close questioning as to the cause of the strange joy which had thrilled every nerve when Max Gordon called her Maude and asked her if she hated him.

"Hate him! Never!" she thought; "but I have been false to the truest, best woman that ever lived. She trusted her lover to me, and ——"

She did not quite know what she had done, but whatever it was it should not be repeated. There were to be no more rides, or drives, or talks alone with Max. And when next day Grace suggested that she go with him to an adjoining town where a fair was to be held, she took refuge in a headache and insisted that Grace should go herself, while Max, too, encouraged it, and tried to believe that he was just as happy with her beside him as he would have been with the young girl who brought a cushion for her mistress' back and adjusted her shawl about her shoulders and arranged her bonnet strings, and then, kissing her fondly, said, "I am so glad that you are going instead of myself."

This was for the benefit of Max, at whom she nodded a little defiantly, and who understood her meaning as well as if she had put it into words. Everything was over between them, and he accepted the situation, and during the remainder of his stay at the Cedars, devoted himself to Grace with an assiduity worthy of the most ardent lover. He even remained longer than he had intended doing, for Grace was loth to let him go, and the soft haze of early September was beginning to show on the Richland hills when he at last said good-

bye, promising to come again at Christmas, if it were possible to do so.

CHAPTER IX.

GOOD-BYE, MAX ; GOOD-BYE.

It was a cold, stormy afternoon in March. The thermometer marked six below zero, and the snow which had fallen the day before was tossed by the wind in great white clouds, which sifted through every crevice of the house at the Cedars, and beat against the window from which Maude Graham was looking anxiously out into the storm for the carriage which had been sent to meet the train in which Max Gordon was expected. He had not kept his promise to be with Grace at Christmas. An important law-suit had detained him, and as it would be necessary for him to go to London immediately after its close, he could not tell just when he would be at the Cedars again.

All through the autumn Grace had been failing, while a cold, taken in November, had left her with a cough, which clung to her persistently. Still she kept up, looking forward to the holidays, when Max would be with her. But when she found he was not coming she lost all courage, and Maude was alarmed to see how rapidly she failed. Nearly all the day she lay upon the couch in her bedroom, while Maude read or sang to her or talked with her of the book which had actually been commenced, and in which Grace was almost as much

interested as Maude herself. Grace was a careful and discriminating critic, and if Maude were ever a success she would owe much of it to the kind friend whose sympathy and advice were so invaluable. A portion of every day she wrote, and every evening read what she had written, to Grace, who smiled as she recognized Max Gordon in the hero and knew that Maude was weaving the tale mostly from her own experience. Even the Bush district and its people furnished material for the plot, and more than one boy and girl who had called Maude schoolma'am figured in its pages, while Grace was everywhere, permeating the whole with her sweetness and purity.

"I shall dedicate it to you," Maude said to her one day, and Grace replied :

"That will be kind ; but I shall not be here to see it, for before your book is published I shall be lying under the flowers in Mt. Auburn. I want you to take me there, if Max is not here to do it."

"Oh, Miss Raynor," Maude cried, dropping her MS. and sinking upon her knees beside the couch where Grace was lying, "you must not talk that way. You are not going to die. I can't lose you, the dearest friend I ever had. What should I do without you, and what would Max Gordon do?"

At the mention of Max's name a faint smile played around Grace's white lips, and lifting her thin hand she laid it caressingly upon the girl's brown hair as she said :

"Max will be sorry for awhile, but after a time there will be a change, and I shall be only a memory. Tell him I was willing, and that although it was hard at first it was easy at the last."

What did she mean? Maude asked herself, while her thoughts went back to that summer afternoon in the log school-house on the hill, when Max Gordon's eyes and voice had in them a tone and look born of more than mere friendship. Did Grace know? Had she guessed the truth? Maude wondered, as, conscience-stricken, she laid her burning cheek against the pale one upon the pillow. There was silence a moment, and when Grace spoke again she said:

"It is nearly time for Max to be starting for Europe, or I should send for him to come, I wish so much to see him once more before I die."

"Do you think a hundred trips to Europe would keep him from you if he knew you wanted him?" Maude asked, and Grace replied:

"Perhaps not. I don't know. I only wish he were here."

This was the last of February, and after that Grace failed so fast, that with the hope that it might reach him before he sailed, Maude wrote to Max, telling him to come at once, if he would see Grace before she died. She knew about how long it would take her letter to reach him and how long for him to come, allowing for no delays, and on the morning of the first day when she could by any chance expect him, she sent the carriage to the Canandaigua station, and then all through the hours of the long, dreary day, she sat by Grace's bedside, watching with a sinking heart the pallor on her lips and brow, and the look she could not mistake deepening on her face.

"What if she should die before he gets here, or what if he should not come at all?" she thought, as the hours went by.

She was more afraid of the latter, and when she saw the carriage coming up the avenue she strained her eyes through the blinding snow to see if he were in it. When he came before he had stood up and waved his hat to them, but there was no token now to tell if he were there, and she waited breathlessly until the carriage stopped before the side entrance, knowing then for sure that he had come.

"Thank God!" she cried, as she went out to meet him, bursting into tears as she said to him, "I am so glad, and so will Miss Raynor be. She does not know that I wrote you. I didn't tell her, for fear you wouldn't come."

She had given him her hand and he was holding it fast as she led him into the hall. She did not ask him when or where he received her letter. She only helped him off with his coat, and made him sit down by the fire while she told him how rapidly Grace had failed and how little hope there was that she would ever recover.

"You will help her, if anything can. I am going to prepare her now," she said, and, going out, she left him there alone.

He had been very sorry himself that he could not keep his promise at Christmas, and had tried to find a few days in which to visit the Cedars between the close of the suit and his departure for England. But he could not, and his passage was taken and his luggage on the ship, which was to sail early in the morning, when, about six o'clock in the evening, Maude's letter was brought to him, changing his plans at once. Grace was dying,—the woman he had loved so long, and although thousands of dollars depended upon his keep-

ing his appointment in London, he must lose it all, and go to her. Sending for his luggage, and writing a few letters of explanation, the next morning found him on his way to the Cedars, which he reached on the day when Maude expected him.

She had left Grace asleep when she went to meet Max, but on re-entering her room found her awake and leaning on her elbow in the attitude of intense listening.

"Oh, Maude," she said, "was it a dream, or did I hear Max speaking to you in the hall? Tell me is he here?"

"Yes, he is here. I sent for him and he came," Maude replied, while Grace fell back upon her pillow, whispering faintly:

"Bring him at once."

"Come," Maude said to Max, who followed her to the sick room, where she left him alone with Grace.

He stayed by her all that night and the day following, in order to give Maude the rest she needed, but when the second night came they kept the watch together, he on one side of the bed, and she upon the other, with their eyes fixed upon the white, pinched face where the shadow of death was settling. For several hours Grace slept quietly. Then, just as the gray daylight was beginning to show itself in the corners of the room, she awoke and asked:

"Where is Max?"

"Here, darling," was his response, as he bent over her and kissed her lips.

"I think it has grown cold and dark, for I can't see you," she said, groping for his hand, which she held tightly between her own as she went on: "I have been dreaming, Max,—such a pleasant dream, for I was

young again,—young as Maude, and wore my bridal dress, just as I did that day when you said I was so pretty. Do you remember it? That was years ago,—oh! so many,—and I am getting old; we both are growing old. You said so in your letter. But Maude is young, and in my dream she wore the bridal dress at the last, and I saw my own grave, with you beside it and Maude, and both so sorry because I was dead. But it is better so, and I am glad to die and be at rest. If I could be what I once was, oh! how I should cling to life! For I love you so much! Oh, Max, do you know, can you guess how I have loved you all these years, and what it has cost me to give you up?"

Max's only answer was the hot tears he dropped upon her face as she went on: "You will not forget me, that I know; but some time,—yes, some time,—and when it comes, remember I was willing. I told Maude so. Where is she?"

"Here!" and Maude knelt, sobbing, by the dying woman, who went on: "She has been everything to me, Max, and I love her next to you. God bless you both! And if, in the Heaven I am going to, I can watch over you, I will do it, and be often, often with you, when you think I'm far away. Who was it said that? I read it long ago. But things are going from me, and Heaven is very near, and the Saviour is with me,—closer, nearer than you are, Max; and the other world is just in sight, where I soon shall be, free from pain, with my poor, crippled feet all strong and well, like Maude's. Dear Maude! tell her how I loved her; tell her ——"

Here her voice grew indistinct, and for a few moments she seemed to be sleeping; then, suddenly, open-

ing her eyes wide, she exclaimed, as an expression of joy broke over her face: "It is here,—the glory which shineth as the noonday. In another moment I shall be walking the golden streets. Good-bye, Max; good-bye."

Grace was dead, and Maude made her ready for the coffin, her tears falling like rain upon the shrivelled feet and on the waxen hands which she folded over the pulseless bosom, placing in them the flowers her mistress had loved best in life. She was to be buried in Mt. Auburn, and Maude went with the remains to Boston, as Grace had requested her to do, caring nothing because Mrs. Marshall-More hinted broadly at the impropriety of the act, wondering how she could have done it.

"She did it at Grace's request, and to please me," Max said; and that silenced the lady, who was afraid of her brother, and a little afraid of Maude, who did not seem quite the girl she had last seen in Merrivale.

"What will you do now? Go back to your teaching?" she asked, after the funeral was over.

"I shall go home to mother," Maude replied, and that afternoon she took the train for Merrivale, accompanied by Max, who was going on to New York, and thence to keep his appointment in London.

Few were the words spoken between them during the journey, and those mostly of the dead woman lying under the snow at Mt. Auburn; but when Merrivale was reached, Max took the girl's hands and pressed them hard as he called her a second time by her name.

"God bless you, Maude, for all you were to Grace. When I can I will write to you. Good-bye."

Only for a moment the train stopped at the station, and then it moved swiftly on, leaving Maude standing

upon the platform with her mother and John, while Max resumed his seat, and pulling his hat over his eyes, never spoke again until New York was reached. A week later and a ship of the Cunard line was plowing the ocean to the eastward, and Max Gordon was among the passengers, silent and abstracted, with a bitter sense of loneliness and pain in his heart as he thought of the living and the dead he was leaving behind,—Grace, who was to have been his bride, dead in all her sweetness and beauty, and Maude, who was nothing to him but a delicious memory, alive in all her freshness and youthful bloom. He could hardly tell of which he thought the more, Grace or Maude. Both seemed ever present with him, and it was many a day before he could rid himself of the fancy that two faces were close against his own, one cold and dead, as he had seen it last, with the snowy hair about the brow and a smile of perfect peace upon the lips which had never said aught but words of love to him,—the other glowing with life and girlish beauty, as it had looked at him in the gathering darkness when he stood upon the car step and waved it his good-bye.

CHAPTER X.

AT LAST.

Five years had passed since Grace was laid in her grave in Mt. Auburn, and Max was still abroad, leading that kind of Bohemian life which many Americans lead in Europe, when there is nothing to call them

home. And to himself Max often said there was nothing to call him home, but as often as he said it a throb of pain belied his words, for he knew that across the sea was a face and voice he was longing to see and hear again, a face which now visited him in his dreams quite as often as that of his dead love, and which he always saw as it had looked at him that summer afternoon in the log house among the Richland hills, with the sunlight falling upon the rings of hair, and lending a warmer tint to the glowing cheeks. Delicious as was the memory of that afternoon, it had been the means of keeping Max abroad during all these years, for, in the morbid state of mind into which he had fallen after Grace's death, he felt that he must do penance for having allowed himself for a moment to forget her, who had believed in him so fully.

"Grace trusted me, and I was false to her and will punish myself for it, even if by the means I lose all that now makes life seem desirable," he thought.

And so he staid on and on, year after year, knowing always just where Maude was and what she was doing, for Archie kept him informed. Occasionally he wrote to her himself,—pleasant, chatty letters, which had in them a great deal of Grace,—his lost darling, he called her,—and a little of the places he was visiting. Occasionally, too, Maude wrote to him, her letters full of Grace, with a little of her life in Merrivale, for she was with her mother now, and had been since Miss Raynor's death. A codicil to Grace's will, bequeathing her a few thousand dollars, made it unnecessary for her to earn her own livelihood. Indeed, she might have bought Spring Farm, if she had liked; but this she would not do. The money given for that must be earned by her-

self, paid by the book she was writing, and which, after it was finished and published, and after a few savage criticisms by some dyspeptic critics, who saw no good in it, began to be read, then to be talked about, then to sell,—until finally it became the rage and was found in every book store, and railway car, and on almost every parlor table in New England, while the young authoress was spoken of as "a star which at one flight had soared to the zenith of literary fame," and this from the very pens which at first had denounced "Sunny Bank" as a milk-and-watery effort, not worth the paper on which it was written.

All Mrs. Marshall-More's guests at Spring Farm read it, and Mrs. Marshall-More and Archie read it, too, and both went down to congratulate the author upon her success, the latter saying to her, when they were alone :

"I say, Maude, your prophecy came true. You told me you'd write a book which every one would read, and which would make mother proud to say she knew you, and, by Jove, you have done it. You ought to hear her talk to some of the Boston people about Miss Graham, the authoress. You'd suppose you'd been her dearest friend. I wonder what Uncle Max will say? I told you you would make him your hero, and you have. I recognized him at once ; but the heroine is more like Grace than you. I am going to send it to him."

And the next steamer which sailed from New York for Europe carried with it Maude's book, directed to Max Gordon, who read it at one sitting in a sunny nook of the Colosseum, where he spent a great part of his time. Grace was in it, and he was in it, too, he was sure, and, reading between the lines what a stranger could not read, he felt when he had finished it that in

the passionate love of the heroine for the hero he heard Maude calling to him to come back to the happiness there was still for him.

"And I will go," he said. "Five years of penance have atoned for five minutes of forgetfulness, and Grace would bid me go, if she could, for she foresaw what would be, and told me she was willing."

With Max to will was to do, and among the list of passengers who sailed from Liverpool, March 20th, 18—, was the name of Maxwell Gordon, Boston, Mass.

* * * * * * *

It was the 2d of April, and a lovely morning, with skies as blue and air as soft and warm as in the later days of May. Spring Farm, for the season, was looking its loveliest, for Mrs. Marshall-More had lavished fabulous sums of money upon it, until she had very nearly transformed it into what she meant it should be, an English Park. She knew that Maude had once expressed her intention to buy it back some day, but this she was sure she could never do, and if she could Max would never sell it, and if he would she would never let him. So, with all these *nevers* to reassure her, she went on year after year improving and beautifying the place until it was worth far more than when it came into her hands, and she was contemplating still greater improvements during the coming summer, when Max suddenly walked in upon her, and announced his intention of going to Merrivale the next day.

"But where will you stay? Both houses are closed only the one at Spring Farm has in it an old couple—Mr. and Mrs. Martin—who look after it in the winter," she said, and Max replied :

"I will stay at Spring Farm with the Martins. I want to see the place." And the next day found him there, occupying the room which, by a little skillful questioning of Mrs. Martin, he learned had been Maude's when her father owned the farm.

Miss Graham was home, she said, and at once launched out into praises of the young authoress of whom Merrivale was so proud.

"And to think," she said, "that she was born here in this very house! It seems so queer."

"And is the house more honored now than when she was simple Maude Graham?" Max asked, and the old lady replied:

"To be sure it is. Any house can have a baby born in it, but not every one an authoress!" and with that she bustled off to see about supper for her guest.

Max was up early the next morning, wondering how soon it would be proper for him to call upon Maude. He had no thought that she would come to him, and was somewhat surprised when just after breakfast her card was brought up by Mrs. Martin, who said she was in the parlor. Maude had heard of his arrival from Mr. Martin, who had stopped at the cottage the previous night on his way to the village.

"Mr. Gordon in town! I supposed he was in Europe!" she exclaimed, feeling herself grow hot and cold and faint as she thought of Max Gordon being so near to her.

That very afternoon she had received the first check from her publisher, and been delighted with the amount, so much more than she had expected. There was enough to buy Spring Farm, if Max did not ask too much, and she resolved to write to him at once and ask

his price. But that was not necessary now, for he was here and she should see him face to face, and the next morning she started for Spring Farm immediately after their breakfast, which was never served very early.

"Will he find me greatly changed, I wonder," she thought, as she sat waiting for him, her heart beating so rapidly that she could scarcely speak when at last he came and stood before her, the same man she had parted from five years before save that he seemed a little older, with a look of weariness in his eyes.

But that lifted the moment they rested upon her.

"Oh, Maude," was all he could say, as he looked into the face he had seen so often in his dreams, though never as beautiful as it was now. "Maude," he began at last, "I cannot tell you how glad I am to see you again, or how glad I am for your success. I read the book in Rome. Archie sent it to me, and I have come to congratulate you."

He was talking so fast and pressing her hands so hard that he almost took her breath away. But she released herself from him, and, determining to have the *business* off her mind as soon as possible, began abruptly:

"I was surprised to hear of your arrival, and glad, too, as it saves me the trouble of writing you. I can buy Spring Farm now. You know you promised to keep it for me. What is your price?"

"How much can you give?" Max asked; and without stopping to consider the strangeness of the question, Maude told him frankly the size of the check she had received, and asked if it were enough.

"No, Maude," Max said, and over the face looking so anxiously at him there fell a cloud of disappointment as Maude replied:

"Is it much more you ask?"

"Yes, a great deal more," and Max seated himself beside her upon the sofa, for she was now sitting down; "but I think you can arrange it. Don't look so sorry. It is *you* I want, not your money. Will you give me yourself in return for Spring Farm?"

He had her hands again, but she drew them from him, and covering her face with them, began to cry, while he went on:

"Five years is a long time to wait for one we love, and I have waited that length of time, with thoughts of you in my heart, almost as much as thoughts of Grace, whom I loved dearly while she lived. But she is dead, and could she speak she would bid you grant me the happiness I have been denied so many years. I think she knew it would come some day. I am sure she did, and she told me she was willing. I did not mean to ask you quite so soon, but the sight of you, and the belief that you care for me as I care for you, has made me forget all the proprieties, and I cannot recall my words, so I ask you again to be my wife, to give me yourself as the price of Spring Farm, which shall be your home as long as you choose to make it so. Will you, Maude? I have come thousands of miles for your answer, which must not be no."

What else he said, or what she said, it is not necessary for the reader to know; only this, that when the two walked back to the cottage Maude said to her mother, "I am to marry Mr. Gordon in June, and you will spend the summer in our old home, and John will go to college in the fall."

It was very bad taste in Max to select the 20th of June for his wedding day, and she should suppose he

would remember twenty years ago, when Grace Raynor was to have been his bride, Mrs. Marshall-More said to Archie, when commenting upon her brother's approaching marriage, which did not altogether please her. She would far rather that he should remain single, for Archie's sake and her own. And still it was some comfort that she was to have for her sister one so famous as Maude was getting to be. So she went up to Merrivale early in June and opened her own house, and patronized Maude and Mrs. Graham, and made many suggestions with regard to the wedding, which she would have had very fine and elaborate had they allowed it. But Maude's preference was for a quiet affair, with only a few of her more intimate friends present. And she had her way. Archie was there, of course, and made himself master of ceremonies. He had received the news of Maude's engagement with a keener pang of regret than he had thought it possible for him to feel, and suddenly woke up to a consciousness that he had always had a greater liking for Maude than he supposed. But it was too late now, and casting his regrets to the winds he made the best of it, and was apparently the gayest of all the guests who, on the morning of the 20th of June, assembled in Mrs. Graham's parlor, where Max and Maude were made one.

Aunt Maude, Archie called her, as he kissed her and asked if she remembered the time she cried on the neck of the brown ox, and declared her hatred of Max and all his relations.

"But I did not know him then; did I, Max?" Maude said; and the bright face she lifted to her husband told that she was far from hating him now.

There was a short trip to the West and a flying visit

to Richland and the Cedars, so fraught with memories of the past and of Grace, whose grave on the wedding day had been one mass of flowers which Max had ordered put there. "Her wedding garment," he said to Maude, to whom he told what he had done. "She seems very near to me now, and I am sure she is glad."

* * * * * *

It was a lovely July day, when Max and Maude returned from their bridal journey and took possession of the old home at Spring Farm, where Mrs. Graham met them with a very different expression upon her face from what it wore when we first saw her there years ago. The place was hers again, to enjoy as long as she lived; and if it had been beautiful when she left it, she found it far more so now, for Mrs. Marshall-More's improvements, for which Max's money had paid, were mostly in good taste, and never had the grounds looked better than when Max and Maude drove into them on this July afternoon. Although a little past their prime, there were roses everywhere, and the grassy walks, which Mrs. More had substituted in place of gravel, were freshly cut, and smooth and soft as velvet, while the old-fashioned flowers Maude loved so well, were filling the air with their perfume, and the birds in the maple tree seemed carolling a welcome to the bride so full were they of song.

And here we shall leave her, happy in her old home and in her husband's love, which is more to her than all the world beside. Whether she will ever write another book we do not know, probably she will, for where the brain seeds have taken root it is hard to dislodge them,

and Maude often hears around her the voices of new ideal friends, to whom she may some time be compelled to give shape and name, as she did to the friends of her childhood.

THE HEPBURN LINE.

CHAPTER I.—Doris's Story.

MY AUNTS.

I had come from my mother's burial to the rector's house, where I was to stay until it should be known what disposition would be made of me by my father's aunts, the Misses Morton, who lived at Morton Park, near Versailles, Kentucky. Of these aunts I knew little, except that there were three of them now, but there had been four, and my great-grandfather, an eccentric old man, had called them respectively, Keziah, Desire, Maria and Beriah which odd names he had shortened into Kizzy and Dizzy, Rier and Brier. My father, who had lived with them when a boy, had often talked of Morton Park, and once when he was telling me of the grand old house, with its wide piazza and Corinthian pillars, its handsome grounds and the troop of blacks ready to come at his call, I had asked him why he didn't go back there, saying I should like it better than our small cottage, where there were no grounds and no Corinthian pillars and no blacks to wait

upon us. For a moment he did not answer, but glanced at my mother with a look of unutterable tenderness, then, drawing us both closely to him, he said, "If I go there I must leave you behind; and I would rather have mamma and you than all the blacks and Corinthian pillars in the world."

Although very young, I felt intuitively that Morton Park was not a pleasant topic of conversation, and I rarely spoke of it to him after that, but I often thought of it, with its Corinthian pillars for which I had a great reverence, and of the blacks, and the maple-trees, and the solid silver from which my aunts dined every day, and wondered when they were so rich why we were so poor and why my father worked as hard as I knew he did, for he often lay upon the couch, saying he was tired, and looking very pale about his mouth, with a bright red spot on either cheek. I heard some one call these spots "the hectic," but did not know what this meant until later on, when he stayed in bed all the time and the doctor said he was dying with quick consumption. Then there came a day when I was called from school and hurried home to find him dead,—my handsome young father, who had always been so loving to me, and whose last words were, "Tell little Doris to be a good girl and kind to her mother. God bless her!"

The blow was so sudden that for a time my mother seemed stunned and incapable of action, but she was roused at last by a letter from my Aunt Keziah, to whom she had written after my father's death. I say a letter, but it was only an envelope containing a check for a hundred dollars and a slip of paper with the words, "For Gerold's child," and when my mother saw it there was a look on her face which I had never seen before,

and I think her first impulse was to tear up the check, but, reflecting that it was not hers to destroy, she only burned the paper and put the money in the bank for me, and then went bravely to work to earn her living and mine, sometimes taking boarders, sometimes going out to nurse sick people, and at last doing dressmaking at home and succeeding so well that I never knew what real poverty was, and was as happy and free from care as children usually are.

My father had been an artist, painting landscapes and portraits when he could find sale for them, and, when he could not, painting houses, barns and fences, for although he had been reared in the midst of luxury, and, as I now know, belonged to one of the best families in Kentucky, he held that all kinds of labor, if necessary, were honorable, and was not ashamed to stand in his overalls side by side with men who in birth and education were greatly his inferiors. At the time of his death he had in his studio a few pictures which had not been sold. Among them was a small one of the house in Morton Park, with its huge white pillars and tall trees in front, and one or two negroes playing under the trees. This I claimed for my own, and also another, which was a picture of his four aunts taken in a group in what seemed to be a summer-house. "The Quartette," he called it, and I had watched him with a great deal of interest as he brought into seeming real life the four faces so unlike each other, Aunt Kizzy, stern and severe and prim, with a cap on her head after the English style, which she affected because her grandfather was English,—Aunt Dizzy, who was very pretty and very youthfully dressed, with flowers in her hair,—Aunt Rier, a gentle, matronly woman, with a fat baby in her

lap which I did not think particularly good-looking,—and Aunt Brier, with a sweet face like a Madonna and a far-away look in her soft gray eyes which reminded one of Evangeline. Behind the four was my father, leaning over Aunt Rier and holding a rose before the baby, who was trying to reach it. The picture fascinated me greatly, and when I heard it was to be sold, with whatever other effects there were in the studio, I begged to keep it. But my mother said No, with the same look on her face which I had seen when she burned Aunt Kizzy's letter. And so it was sold to a gentleman from Boston, who was spending the summer in Meadowbrook, and I thought no more of it until years after, when it was brought to my mind in a most unexpected manner.

I was ten when I lost my father, and fourteen when my mother, too, died suddenly, and I was alone, with no home except the one the rector kindly offered me until something should be heard from my aunts. My mother had seemed so well and active, and, with her brilliant color and beautiful blue eyes and chestnut hair which lay in soft waves all over her head, had been so pretty and young and girlish-looking, that it was hard to believe her dead, and the hearts of few girls of fourteen have ever been wrung with such anguish as I felt when, after her funeral, I lay down upon a bed in the rectory and sobbed myself into a disturbed sleep, from which I was roused by the sound of voices in the adjoining room, where a neighbor was talking with Mrs. Wilmot, the rector's wife, of me and my future.

"Her aunts will have to do something now. They will be ashamed not to. Do you know why they have so persistently ignored Mr. and Mrs. Gerold Morton?"

It was Mrs. Smith, the neighbor, who asked the question, and Mrs. Wilmot replied, "I know but little, as Mrs. Morton was very reticent upon the subject. I think, however, that the aunts were angry because Gerold, who had always lived with them, made what they thought a misalliance by marrying the daughter of the woman with whom he boarded when in college. They had in mind another match for him, and when he disappointed them, they refused to recognize his wife or to see him again."

"But did he have nothing from his father? I thought the Mortons were very rich," Mrs. Smith said, and Mrs. Wilmot answered her, "Nothing at all, for his father, too, had married against the wishes of *his* father, a very hard and strange man, I imagine, who promptly disinherited his son. But when the young wife died at the birth of her child, the aunts took the little boy Gerold and brought him up as their own. I do not at all understand it, but I believe the Morton estate is held by a long lease and will eventually pass from the family unless some one of them marries somebody in the family of the old man who gave the lease."

"They seem to be given to misalliances," Mrs. Smith rejoined; "but if they could have seen Gerold's wife they must have loved her, she was so sweet and pretty. Doris is like her. She will be a beautiful woman, and her face alone should commend her to her aunts."

No girl of fourteen can hear unmoved that she is lovely, and, although I was hot with indignation at my aunts for their treatment of my father and their contempt for my mother, I was conscious of a stir of gratification, and as I went to the wash-stand to bathe my burning forehead I glanced at myself in the mirror.

My face was swollen with weeping, and my eyes were very red, with dark circles around them, but they were like my mother's, and my hair was like hers, too, and there was an expression about my mouth which brought her back to me. I was like my mother, and I was glad she had left me her heritage of beauty, although I cared but little whether it commended me to my aunts or not, as I meant to keep aloof from them, if possible. I could take care of myself, I thought, and any hardship would be preferable to living with them, even should they wish to have me do so, which was doubtful.

To Mrs. Wilmot I said nothing of what I had overheard, but waited in some anxiety for Aunt Kizzy's letter, which came about two weeks after my mother's death. It was directed to Mr. Wilmot, and was as follows :

"MORTON PARK, September 10, 18—.

"REV. J. S. WILMOT :

"DEAR SIR,—Your letter is received, and I have delayed my reply until we could give our careful consideration as to what to do, or rather how to do it. We have, of course, no option in the matter as to *what* to do, for naturally we must care for Gerold's daughter, but we shall do it in the way most agreeable to ourselves. As you will have inferred, we are all elderly people, and I am old. I shall be sixty next January. Miss Desire, my sister, is forty-seven. (Between her and myself there were two boys who died in infancy.) Maria, my second sister, would, if living, be forty-five, and Beriah is nearly thirty-eight. Thus, you see, we are no longer young, but are just quiet people, with our habits too firmly fixed to have them broken in upon by a girl who probably talks slang and would fill the house with noise and chatter, singing at most inopportune moments, banging the doors, pulling the books from the

shelves and the chairs into the middle of the rooms, and upsetting things generally. No, we couldn't bear it, and just the thought of it has given me a chill.

"We expect to educate the girl,—Doris, I think you called her,—but it must be at the North. If there is a good school in Meadowbrook, perhaps it will be well for her to remain there for a while, and if you choose to retain her in your family you will be suitably remunerated for all the expense and trouble. When she is older I shall place her in some institution where she will receive a thorough education, besides learning the customs of good society. After that we may bring her to Morton Park. For the present, however, I prefer that she should remain with you, for, as you are a clergyman, you will attend to her moral training and see that she is staunch and true in every respect. I hate deception of all kinds, and I wish her to learn the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments and the Creed, and to be confirmed at the proper age. She is about ten now, is she not?

"Enclosed you will find a check sufficient, I think, for the present necessities. If more is needed, it will be sent. Please let me know if there is a good school in Meadowbrook, and if there is none, will you kindly recommend one which you think suitable?

"Yours truly,

"Miss Keziah Morton."

This was the letter which I read, looking over Mr. Wilmot's shoulder, and growing more and more angry as I read, it was so heartless and cold, with no word of real interest or sympathy for me, who was merely a burden which must be carried, whether she were willing or not.

"I'll never accept a penny from her," I exclaimed, "and you may tell her so. I'd rather scrub than be dependent upon these proud relatives, who evidently think me a heathen. The Lord's Prayer, indeed! and

I fourteen years old! I wonder if she thinks I know how to read!"

I was very defiant and determined, but after a little I grew calmer, and as the graded school in Meadowbrook, which I had always attended, was excellent of its kind, and the Wilmots were glad to have me with them, I consented at last that a letter to that effect should be forwarded to Kentucky. But when Mr. Wilmot suggested that I, too, should write and thank my aunt for her kindness, I stoutly refused. I was not thankful, I said, neither did I think her kind as I understood kindness, and I could not tell a lie. Later, however, it occurred to me that as she had said she wished me to be true and staunch, and that she hated deception, it might be well to let her know just how I felt towards her, so as not to occupy a false position in the future. Accordingly I wrote a letter, of which the following is a copy:

"MEADOWBROOK, MASS., September —, 18—.

"MISS KEZIAH MORTON:

"DEAR MADAM,—Mr. Wilmot has told you that there is a good school in Meadowbrook and that he is glad to keep me in his family. He wished me also to thank you for your kindness in furnishing the means for my education, and if I really felt thankful I would do so. But I don't, and I cannot pretend to be grateful, for I do not think your offer was made in kindness, but because, as you said in your letter, you had no option except to care for me. You said, too, that you did not like deception of any kind, and I think I'd better tell you how I feel about accepting help from you. Since my mother died I have accidentally heard how you treated her and neglected my father because of her, and naturally I am indignant, for a sweeter, lovelier woman than my mother never lived. When she died and left me alone, there was a leaning in my heart towards you and the

other aunts, because you were the only relatives I have in the world, and if you had shown the least sympathy for me I could have loved you so much. But in your letter you never said one word of pity or comfort. You offered to educate me, that was all. But I prefer to care for myself, and I can do it, too. I am fourteen, and can earn my own living. I can make dresses, as mother did after father died, or I can do second work until I have enough to pay for my schooling. And I would rather do it than be indebted to any one, and if, when you get this, you think best to change your mind, I shall be glad. But if you do not, I shall try to improve every moment and get a thorough education as soon as possible, and when I can I shall pay you every dollar you expend for me, and you need have no fears that I shall ever disgrace my father's name, or you either.

"I used to think that I should like to see Morton Park, as it was once my father's home, but since reading your letter I have no desire to go there and bang doors, and pull the books from the shelves, and sing, whether invited to or not, and shock you with slang. I suppose I do use some,—all the girls do, and example is contagious,—and I am fond of singing, and would like nothing better than to take lessons in vocal and instrumental music, but I am not quite a heathen, and can hardly remember when I did not know the Lord's Prayer, and Ten Commandments, and Creed. But I have not been confirmed, and do not intend to be until I am a great deal better than I am now, for I believe there is something necessary to confirmation besides mere intellectual knowledge. Father and mother taught me that, and they were true Christians.

"Father used sometimes to tell me of his home and his aunts, who were kind to him, and so, perhaps, you would like to know how peacefully he died, and how handsome he was in his coffin, just as if he were asleep. But mother was lovelier still, with such a sweet smile on her face, and her dear little hands folded upon her bosom. There were needle-pricks and marks of the

hard work she had done on her fingers, but I covered them with great bunches of the white pond-lilies she loved so much, and then kissed her good-bye forever, with a feeling that my heart was broken ; and, oh, it aches so now when I remember that in all the world there is no one who cares for me, or on whom I have any claim.

"I don't know why I have written this to you, who, of course, have no interest in it, but guess I did it because I am sure you once loved father a little. I do not expect you to love me, but if I can ever be of any service to you I will, for father's sake ; and something tells me that in the future, I don't know when or how, I shall bring you some good. Until then adieu.

"DORIS MORTON."

I knew this was not the kind of letter which a girl of fourteen should send to a woman of sixty, but I was indignant and hot-headed and young, and felt that in some way I was avenging my mother's wrongs, and so the letter was sent, unknown to the Wilmots, and I waited anxiously for the result. But there was none, so far as I knew. Aunt Kizzy did not answer it, and in her letter to Mr. Wilmot she made no reference to it. She merely said she was glad I was to live in a clergyman's family under religious influence, and added that if I had a good voice and he thought it desirable I was to have instruction in both vocal and instrumental music.

It did not occur to me to connect this with anything I had written, but I was very glad, for I was passionately fond of music, as I was of books generally. And so for two years I was a pupil in the High School in Meadowbrook, passing from one grade to another, until at last I was graduated with all the honors which such an institution could give.

During this time not a word had ever been written to me by my aunts. The bills had been regularly paid through Mr. Wilmot, to whom Aunt Kizzy's letters were addressed, and at the end of every quarter a report of my standing in scholarship and deportment had been forwarded to Kentucky. And that was all I knew of my relatives, who might have been Kamschatkans for anything they were to me.

About six months before I was graduated, Mr. Wilmot was told that I was to be sent to Madame De Moisiere's School in Boston, and then, three months later, without any reason for the change, I learned that I was to go to Wellesley, provided I could pass the necessary examination. Of this I had no fears, but the change disappointed me greatly, as I had heard glowing accounts of Madame De Moisiere's School from a girl friend who had been there, and at first I rebelled against Wellesley, which I fancied meant nothing but hard study, with little recreation. But there was no help for it. Aunt Keziah's law was the law of the Medes and Persians, and one morning in September I said good-bye to Meadowbrook and started for Wellesley, which seemed to me then a kind of intellectual prison.

CHAPTER II.—Beriah's story.

DORIS.

Morton Park, June —, 18—.

Ten o'clock at night, and I have brought out my old book for a little chat. I am sure I don't know why I continue to write in my journal, when I am nearly forty years old, unless it is because I began it nineteen years ago, on the day after I said good-bye to Tom forever and felt that my heart was broken. It was just such a moonlight night as this when we walked under the elms in the Park and he told me I was a coward, because I would not brave Kizzy's wrath and marry out of the "accursed Hepburn line," as he called it. Well, I *was* afraid of Kizzy, and shrank from all the bitterness and trouble which has come to us through that Hepburn line. First, there was my brother Douglas, twenty-five years older than I am, who, because he married the girl he loved, instead of the one he didn't, was sent adrift without a dollar. Why didn't my father, I wonder, marry into the line himself, and so save all this trouble? Probably because he was so far removed from the crisis now so fast approaching, that he ventured to take my mother, to whom he was always tender and loving, showing that there was kindness in his nature, although he could be so hard on Douglas and the dear little wife who died when Gerold was born. Then came the terrible time when both my father and mother were swept away on the same day by the cholera, and six

months after Douglas died, and his boy Gerold came to live with us. He was two years my senior, and more like my brother than my nephew, and I loved him dearly and spoke up for him when Kizzy turned him out, just as Douglas had been turned out before him. Had I dared I would have written to him and assured him of my love, but I could not, so great was my dread of Keziah, who exercises a kind of hypnotic power over us all. She tried to keep Desire from the man of her choice, and might have succeeded, if death had not forestalled her. She sent Tom away from me, and only yielded to Maria, who had a will as strong as her own and married whom she pleased. But she, too, died just after her husband, who was shot in the battle of Fredericksburgh, and we have no one left but her boy Grant, who is almost as dear to me as Gerold was.

Grant is a young man now, and I trust he will marry Dorothea, and so break the evil spell which that old man must have put upon us when to the long lease of ninety years given to my grandfather he tacked that strange condition that if before the expiration of the lease a direct heir of Joseph Morton, of Woodford County, Kentucky, married a direct heir of Amos Hepburn, of Keswick, England, only half the value of the property leased should revert to the Hepburn heir, while the other half should remain in the Morton family. If no such marriage has taken place, uniting the houses of Morton and Hepburn, then the entire property goes to the direct heir of the Hepburns. I believe I have stated it as it is worded in that old yellow document which Keziah keeps in the family Bible and reads every day with a growing dread of what will soon befall us unless Grant marries Dorothea, who, so

far as we know, stands first in the Hepburn line, and to whom the Morton estate will go if it passes from our hands.

I have sometimes doubted if that clause would stand the test of law, and have said so to Keziah, suggesting to her to take advice on the subject. But she treated my suggestion with scorn, charging me with wishing to be dishonest, and saying that even if it were illegal it was the request of Amos Hepburn, and father had instilled it into her mind that a dead man's wish was law, and she should abide by it. Neither would she allow me to ask any legal advice, or talk about the matter to any one.

"It is our own business," she said, "and if we choose to give up our home it concerns no one but ourselves."

But she does not expect to give it up, for our hopes are centred on Grant's marrying Dorothea; and as one means of accomplishing this end he must be kept from Doris and all knowledge of her.

Poor little orphaned Doris! I wonder what she is like, and why Keziah is so hard upon her! She is not to blame because her father married the daughter of his landlady, whom Keziah calls a cook. How well I recall a morning two or three years ago when, at the tick of the clock announcing eight, Kizzy and Dizzy and I marched solemnly down to breakfast just as we have done for the last twenty years and shall for twenty more if we live so long, Keziah first in her black dress and lace cap, with her keys jingling at her side, Desire next, in her white gown and blue ribbons, which she will wear until she is seventy, and I, in my chintz wrapper of lavender and white, colors which Tom said were becoming to me and which I usually select. I

can hear the swish of our skirts on the stairs, and see the round table with its china and glass and flowers, and old Abe, the butler, bringing in the coffee and toast, and a letter for Keziah, who read it twice, and then, folding it very deliberately, said, "Gerold's widow is dead and has left a little girl, and a Rev. Mr. Wilmot has written to know what is to be done with her."

"Oh, bring her here, by all means!" both Dizzy and I exclaimed in a breath, while Keziah's face, which is always severe and stern, grew more so as she replied, in the tone from which there is no appeal, "She will stay where she is, if there is a decent school there. I shall educate her, of course; there is no alternative; but she cannot come here until she is sufficiently cultivated not to mortify us with her bad manners, as blood will tell. I have never forgiven her mother for marrying Gerold, and I cannot yet forgive this girl for being that woman's daughter."

Both Desire and myself knew how useless it was to combat Keziah when her mind was made up. So we said nothing more about the child, and kept as much as possible out of Keziah's way, for when she is disturbed she is not a pleasant person to meet in a *tete-a-tete*. We knew she wrote to Mr. Wilmot, and that he replied, and then, two days after, when we went down to breakfast, we found another letter for Keziah. It was from Doris, and Keziah read it aloud, while her voice and hands shook with wrath, and Desire and I exchanged glances of satisfaction and touched each other slyly with our feet in token of sympathy with the child, who dared write thus to one who had ruled us so long that we submitted to her now without a protest. It was a very saucy letter, but it showed the mettle of

the girl, and I respected her for it, and my heart went out to her with a great pity when she said, "If you had shown the least sympathy for me I could have loved you so much, but you did not. You offered to care for me because you felt that you must, but you never sent me one word of pity or comfort."

"Oh, Keziah," I exclaimed at this point, "is that true? Did you write to Mr. Wilmot and say no word to the child?"

"I never say what I do not feel," was Keziah's answer, as she read on, and when she had finished the letter she added, "She is an ungrateful girl, fitter for a dressmaker or maid, no doubt, than for anything higher. But she is a Morton, and must not be suffered to do a menial's work. I shall educate her in my own way, but shall not recognize her socially until I know the kind of woman into which she develops. Neither must you waste any sentimentality upon her, or make any advances in the shape of letters, for I will not have it. Let her stand alone awhile. She seems to be equal to it. And ——" here she hesitated, while her pale cheek flushed a little, as she continued, "she is older than I supposed. She is fourteen,—very pretty, or beautiful, I think Mr. Wilmot said, and that does not commend her to me. You know how susceptible Grant is to beauty, and there must be no more mistakes. The time is too short for that. Grant is going to Andover, which is not far from Meadowbrook, and if he knew of this girl, who is his second cousin, nothing could keep him from seeing her, and there is no telling what complications might arise, for she is undoubtedly designing like her mother, who won Gerold from the woman he should have married. Consequently you are to say

nothing to Grant of this girl; then, if he chances to meet her and trouble comes of it, I shall know the hand of fate is in it."

"But, Keziah," I remonstrated, "you surely cannot expect that Grant will never know anything of Doris? That is preposterous!"

"He need know nothing of her until matters are arranged between him and Dorothea, who is only fifteen now, while he is eighteen,—both too young as yet for an engagement. But it must be. It shall be!"

She spoke with great energy, and we, who knew her so well, felt sure that it would be, and knew that so far as Grant or any of us were concerned, Doris was to remain a myth until such time as Keziah chose to bring her home. But if we could not speak of her to Grant, Desire and I talked of her often between ourselves, and two or three times I began a letter to her, but always burned it, so great was my fear of Keziah's displeasure should she find it out. We knew the girl was well cared for and happy, and that she stood high in all her classes, for the very best of reports came regularly from her teachers, both with regard to deportment and to scholarship. Perhaps I am wrong, but I cannot help thinking that Keziah would have been better pleased if some fault had been found in order to confirm her theory that blood will tell. But there has been none, and she was graduated with honor at the High School in Meadowbrook, and every arrangement was made for her to go to Madame De Moisiere's school in Boston, where she particularly wished to go, when suddenly Keziah changed her mind in favor of Wellesley, where Doris did not wish to go. "She is bitterly disappointed, and I shall be glad if you can think best to adhere to

your first plan," Mr. Wilmot wrote, but did not move Keziah a whit. It was either Wellesley or some out-of-the-way place in Maine, which I do not recall. Doris has chosen Wellesley, of course, while Dizzy and I have put our wits to work to find the cause of the change, and I think we have found it. Dorothea has suddenly made up her mind to go to Madame De Moisiere.

"I don't care for books, any way," she wrote. "I am a dunce, and everybody knows it and seems to like me just as well. But old Gardy thinks I ought to go somewhere to be finished, and so I have chosen De Moisiere, where I expect to have no end of fun provided I can hoodwink the teachers, and I think I can. Besides, as you may suspect, the fact that Grant has finished Andover and is now in Harvard has a good deal to do with my choice, for he will call upon me, of course. I shall be so proud of him, as I hear he is very popular, and all the girls will be green with envy!"

"The dear rattle-brained child," Keziah said, chuckling over the letter, as she would not have chuckled if it had been from Doris,—"the dear rattle-brained child! Of course Grant must call, and I shall write to the professors, giving my permission, and to Madame asking her to allow him to see her."

Poor, innocent Kizzy! It is so many years since she was at boarding-school, where she was kept behind bars and bolts, and she knows so little how fast the world has moved since then, that she really believes young people are kept as closely now as they were forty years ago. What would she say if she knew how many times Grant was at Madame's while he was at Andover and during his first year at Harvard, and how many flirtations he has had with the girls, whom he calls a jolly

lot. All this he confided to Dizzy and myself, when at the vacation he came home, fresh and breezy and full of fun and frolic and noise, making our quiet house resound with his college songs and Harvard yells, which I think are hideous, and rather fast, if not low. But Kizzy never utters a word of protest, and pays without questioning the enormous bills sent to her, and seems gratified to know that his rooms are as handsome and his turnout as fine as any in Cambridge.

Grant has the first place in Kizzy's heart, and Dorothea the next, and because she is going to Madame De Moisiere, Doris must not go, for naturally she would fall in with Dorothea, and through her with Grant, who would not be insensible to his pretty cousin's charms, and who would resent his having been kept from her so long. Mr. Wilmot has written that she is exceedingly beautiful, with a manner which attracts every one, while some of her teachers have written the same. Dorothea, on the contrary, is rather plain. "Ugly as a hedge fence," Grant once said of her in a fit of pique, declaring that if he ever married, it would be to a pretty face. And so he must not see Doris until he is engaged to Dorothea, as it seems likely he soon will be, and Doris is going to Wellesley, where Kizzy thinks Grant has never been and never can go without her permission! Deluded Kizzy! Grant knows at least a dozen Wellesley girls, each one of whom he designates a brick. Will he find Doris, I wonder? I cannot help hoping so. Ah, well, the world is a queer mixture, and *nous verrons.*

It is growing late, and everybody in and around the house is asleep, except myself and Nero, the watch-dog, who is fiercely baying the moon or barking at some

thieving negro stealing our eggs or chickens. The clock is striking twelve, and I must say good-night to my journal and to Tom, if he is still alive, and to dear little Doris : so leaning from my window into the cool night air, I will kiss my hand to the north and south and east and west, and say God bless them both, wherever they are.

CHAPTER III.—Doris's Story.

GRANTLEY MONTAGUE AND DOROTHEA.

It was a lovely morning in September when, with Lucy Pierce, a girl friend, I took the train for Boston, where I was to spend the night with Lucy's aunt, who lived there, and the next day go to Wellesley. Soon after we were seated, a young man who had formerly lived in Meadowbrook, but was now a clerk in some house in Chicago and was going to Boston on business, entered the car, and after the first greetings were over, said to us, "I saw you get in at Meadowbrook, and have come to speak with you and have a little rest. The through sleeper from Chicago and Cincinnati is half full of school girls and Harvard boys, who have kept up such a row. Why, it was after twelve last night before they gave us a chance to sleep. They are having a concert now, and a girl from Cincinnati, whom they call Thea, and who seems to be the ringleader, is playing the banjo, while another shakes a tambourine, and a tall fellow from Kentucky, whom they call General Grant, is whistling an accompaniment. I rather

think Miss Thea is pretty far gone with the general, the way she turns her great black eyes on him, and I wouldn't wonder if he were a little mashed on her, although she is not what I call pretty. And yet she has a face which one would look at twice, and like it better the second time than the first ; and, by Jove, she handles that banjo well. I wish you could see her."

When we reached Worcester, where we were to stop a few minutes, Lucy and I went into the sleeper, from which many of the passengers had alighted, leaving it free to the girls and the Harvards, who were enjoying themselves to their utmost. The concert was at its height, banjo and tambourine-players and whistler all doing their best, and it must be confessed that the best was very good. Thea was evidently the centre of attraction, as, with her hat off and her curly bangs pushed back from her forehead, her white fingers swept the strings of the banjo with a certain inimitable grace, and her brilliant, laughing eyes looked up to the young man, who was bending over her with his back to me so I could not see his face. I only knew he was tall and broad-shouldered, with light brown hair which curled at the ends, and that his appearance was that of one bred in a city, who has never done anything in his life but enjoy himself. And still he fascinated me almost as much as Thea, who, as I passed her, said to him, with a soft Southern accent, "For shame, Grant,—to make so horrid a discord ! I believe you did it on purpose, and I shall not play any more. The concert is ended ; pass round the hat ;" and, dropping her banjo on her lap and running her fingers through her short hair until it stood up all over her head, she leaned back as if exhausted and fanned herself with her sailor hat. With

the exception of her eyes and hair, she was not pretty in the usual acceptation of the term. But, as young Herring had said, one would turn to look at her twice and like her better the second time than the first, for there was an irresistible charm in her manner and smile and voice, which to me seemed better than mere beauty of feature and complexion.

When he reached the depot in Boston I saw her again, and then thought her very pretty as she stood upon the platform, taking her numerous parcels from "General" Grant, with whom she was gayly chattering.

"Now mind you come soon. I shall be so homesick till I see you. I am half homesick now," she said, brushing a tear, either real or feigned, from her eyes.

"But suppose they won't let me call? They are awfully stiff when they get their backs up, and they are not very fond of me," the young man said, and she replied, "Oh, they will, for your aunt and Gardy are going to write and ask permission for me to see you, so that is fixed. *Au revoir.*" And, kissing her fingers to him, she followed her companions, while Grant went to look for his baggage.

He had been standing with his back to me, but as he turned I saw his face distinctly and started involuntarily with the thought that I had seen him before, or somebody like him. Surely there was something familiar about him, and the memory of my dead father came back to me and was associated with this young man, thoughts of whom clung to me persistently, until the strangeness and novelty of Wellesley drove him and Thea from my mind for a time.

Of my student life at Wellesley, I shall say but little,

except that as a student I was contented and happy. I loved study for its own sake, and no task was too long, no lesson too hard, for me to master. I stood high in all my classes, and was popular with my teachers and the few girls whom I chose as my friends. And still there was constantly with me a feeling of unrest,—a longing for something I could not have. Mordecai sat in the gate, and my Mordecai was the restrictions with which my Aunt Keziah hedged me round, not only in a letter written to my teachers, but in one which she sent to me when I had been in Wellesley three or four weeks. I was not expecting it, and at the sight of her handwriting my heart gave a great bound, for she was my blood relation, and although I had no reason to love her, I had more than once found myself wishing for some recognition from her. At last it had come, I thought, and with moist eyes and trembling hands I opened the letter, which was as follows :

"DEAR DORIS,—It has come to my knowledge that a great deal more license is allowed to young people than in my day, and that young men sometimes call upon or manage to see school-girls without the permission of their parents or guardians. This is very reprehensible, and something I cannot sanction. I am at a great expense for your education, in order that you may do credit to your father's name, and I wish you to devote your entire energies and thoughts to your books, and on no account to receive calls or attentions of any kind from any one, and especially a Harvard student. My orders are strict in this respect, and I have communicated them to your Principal. You can, if accompanied by a teacher, go occasionally to a concert or a lecture in Boston, but, as a rule you are better in the building, and must have nothing to do with the Harvarders. Your past record is good and I expect your future to

be the same, and shall be pleased accordingly. I shall send your quarter's spending money to Miss ——, who will give it to you as you need it, and I do this because I hear that girls at school are sometimes given to buying candy by the box,—French candy, too,—and sweets by the jar, and to having *spreads*, whatever these may be. But you can afford none of these extravagancies, and, lest you should be tempted to indulge in them, I have removed the possibility from your way by giving your allowance to Miss ——, and I wish you to keep an account of all your little incidental expenses, and send it to me with the quarterly reports of your standing.

"I have arranged with the Wilmots for you to spend your vacations with them. But when your education is finished, if your record is as good as it has been, you will come to us, of course, if we have a home for you to come to. There is a dark cloud hanging over us, and whether it will burst or not I cannot tell. If it does, you may be obliged to earn your own living, and hence the necessity for you to get a thorough education. I am thankful to say that, for people of our years, your aunts and myself are in comfortable health. If you wish to write me occasionally and tell me of your life at Wellesley, you can do so, but you must not expect prompt replies, as people at my time of life are not given to voluminous correspondence.

"Yours truly,

"Keziah Morton."

I had opened the letter with eager anticipations of what it might contain, but when I finished it my heart was hardening with a sense of the injustice done me by treating me as if I were a little child, who could not be trusted with my own pocket money, and who was to give an account for every penny spent, from a postage stamp to a car fare. And this at first hurt me worse than the other restrictions. I did not know much about the Harvard boys or spreads, and I did not care espe-

cially for French candy and sweets, but now that they were so summarily forbidden, I began to want them and to rebel against the chains which bound me, and as the weeks and months went on, I became more and more conscious of a feeling of desolation and loneliness, which at times made me very unhappy. In Meadowbrook I had been so kindly cared for by the Wilmots that, except for the sense of loss when I thought of my mother, I had not fully realized how alone I was in the world; but at Wellesley, when I heard my companions talk of their homes and saw their delight when letters came to them from father or mother or brothers or sisters, I used to go away and cry with an intense longing for the love of some one of my own kindred and friends. I had no letters from home and no home to go to during the vacations except that of the Wilmots, who always made me welcome. I stood alone, a sort of *goody-goody*, as the girls called me when I resisted their entreaties to join in violation of the rules. I took no part in what Aunt Keziah called spreads. I seldom saw a Harvard student, but heard a good deal about them and learned that they were not the monsters Aunt Kizzy thought them to be.

My room-mate, Mabel Stearns, had a brother in Harvard, whose intimate friend was called General Grant, but whose real name was Grantley Montague, Mabel said, adding that he was a Kentuckian and belonged to a very aristocratic family. He was reported to be rich, spending his money freely, and while always managing to have his lessons and stand well with the professors, still arranging to have a hand in every bit of fun and frolic that came in his way. I heard, too, of Dorothea Haynes, who was at Madame De Mosiere's,

She was a great heiress and an orphan, and lived in Cincinnati with her guardian, whom she called old Gardy, who gave her all the money she wanted, and whose instructions were that, as she was delicate, she was not to have too many lessons or study too hard. Like Grantley Montague, she was very popular, and no one had so many callers from Harvard. Prominent among these was Grantley Montague, who was very lover-like in his attentions. Happy Dorothea Haynes, I thought, envying her for her money,—which was not doled out to her in quarters and halves,—envying her for her freedom, and envying her most for her acquaintance with Grantley Montague, who occupied much of my thoughts, but who seemed as far removed from me as the planets from the earth.

I never went anywhere, except occasionally to a concert, or a lecture, and to church. I seldom saw any one except the teachers and students around me, and, although I was very fond of my books, time dragged rather monotonously with me until I had been at Wellesley about two and a half years, when Mabel who had spent Sunday in Boston came back on Monday radiant and full of news which she hastened to communicate. Grantley Montague and her brother Fred were soon to give a tea-party under the auspices of her married sister, who lived in Cambridge, and who was to be assisted by two or three other ladies. I had heard of these receptions, where Thea Haynes usually figured so prominently in wonderful costumes, but if any wish that I might have part in them ever entered my mind, it was quickly smothered, for such things were not for me, fettered as I was by my aunt Keziah's orders, which were not relaxed in the least, although I was now nine-

teen years of age. How then was I surprised and delighted when with Mabel's invitation there came one for me! It was through her influence, I knew, but I was invited, and for a few moments I was happier than I had ever been in my life. Then came the thought expressed in words, "Can I go?"

"Certainly," Mabel said; "you have only to write your aunt, who will say yes at once, if you tell her how much you desire it, and Miss —— will give her permission gladly, for you are the model scholar. You never get into scrapes, and have scarcely had an outing except a few stupid lectures or concerts with a teacher tacked on, and I don't believe you have spoken to a Harvarder since you have been here. Of course she will let you go; if she don't, she's an old she-dragon. Write to her at once, and blarney her a little, if necessary."

I did not know how to blarney, and I was horribly afraid of the she-dragon, as Mabel called her, but I wrote her that day, telling her what I wanted, and how much pleasure it would give me to go. It was the first favor I had asked, I said, and I had tried so hard to do what I thought would please her, that I hoped she would grant it, and, as there was not very much time for delay, would she please telegraph her answer? I signed myself, "Your affectionate niece, Doris Morton," and then waited, anxiously, for a reply. I knew about how long it took for a letter to reach Morton Park, and on the fourth day after mine was sent I grew so nervous that I could scarcely eat or keep my mind upon my lessons. Encouraged by Mabel, I had come to think it quite sure that my aunt would consent, and had tried on my two evening dresses to see which was the more

becoming to me, crimson surah with creamy trimmings, or cream-colored cashmere with crimson trimmings. Mabel decided for the cashmere, which, she said, softened my brilliant color, and I sewed a bit of lace into the neck and fastened a bow of ribbon a little more securely, and was smoothing the folds of the dress and wondering what Grantley Montague would think of it and me, when there was a knock at my door and a telegram was handed me. I think the sight of one of those yellow missives quickens the pulse of every one, and for a moment my heart beat so fast that I could scarcely stand. I was alone, for Mabel had gone out, and, dropping into a chair, I opened the envelope with hands which shook as if I were in a chill. Then everything swam before my eyes and grew misty, except the one word *No*, which stamped itself upon my brain so indelibly that I see it now as distinctly as I saw it then, and I feel again the pang of disappointment and the sensation as if my heart were beating in my throat and choking me to death. I remember trying to cry, with a thought that tears might remove the pressure in my head, which was like a band of steel. But I could not, and for a few moments I sat staring at the word *No*, which for a time turned me into stone. Then I arose and hung up the dress I was not to wear, and put away the long gloves I had bought to go with it, and was standing by the window, looking drearily out upon the wintry sky, when Mabel came in, full of excitement and loaded with parcels.

She had been shopping in Boston, and she displayed one after another the slippers and fan and handkerchief she had bought for the great occasion of which she had heard so much. Grantley Montague, she said, was

sparing no pains to make it the very finest affair of the season, and Thea Haynes was having a wonderful costume made, although she already had a dozen Paris gowns in her wardrobe. Then, as I did not enter very heartily into her talk, she suddenly stopped, and, looking me in the face, exclaimed, "What is it, Dorey? Has the answer come?"

I nodded, and spying the dispatch on the table, she snatched it up and read *No*, and then began pirouetting wildly around the room, with exclamations not very complimentary to my aunt.

"The vile old cat!" she said. "What does she mean by treating you so, and you the model who never do anything out of the way, and have never been known to join in the least bit of a lark? But I would spite the hateful old woman. I'd be bad if I were you. Suppose you jump out of the window to-night, or do something to assert your rights. Will you? A lot of us will help."

She had expressed aloud much that had passed through my mind during the last hour. What was the use of being a *goody-goody*, as I was so often called? Why not be a *bady-bady* and taste forbidden fruit for once? I had asked myself, half resolving to throw off all restraint and see how bad I could be. But when I thought of my teachers, who trusted me and whom I loved, and more than all when I remembered my dead mother's words, "If your aunts care for you, respect their wishes as you would mine," my mood changed. I would do right whatever came; and I said so to Mabel, who called me a milksop and sundry other names equally expressive, and declared she would not tell me a thing about the reception. But I knew she would, and she did, and

for days after it I heard of little else than the *perfectly elegant* affair.

"Such beautiful rooms," she said, "with so many pictures, and among them such a funny one of four old women sitting in a row, like owls on a pole, with a moon-faced baby in the lap of one of them, and a young man behind them. It has a magnificent frame, and I meant to have asked its history, but forgot it, there was so much else to look at."

I wonder now that I did not think of my father's picture of his four aunts, which was sold to a Boston dealer years before ; but I did not, and Mabel rattled on, telling me of the guests, and the dresses, especially that of Thea Haynes, which she did not like ; it was too low in front and too low in the back, and fitted her form too closely, and the sleeves were too short for her thin arms.

"But then it was all right because it was Thea Haynes, and she is very nice and agreeable and striking, with winning manners and a sweet voice," she said. "Everybody was ready to bow down to her, except Grantley Montague, who was just as polite to one as to another, and who sometimes seemed annoyed at the way she monopolized him, as if he were her special property. I am so sorry you were not there, as you would have thrown her quite in the shade, for you are a thousand times handsomer than she."

This was of course flattering to my vanity, but it did not remove the feeling of disappointment, which lasted for a long time and was not greatly lessened when about a week after the reception I received from Aunt Keziah a letter which I knew was meant to be conciliatory. She was sorry, she said, to have to refuse the first

favor I had ever asked, but she had good reasons, which she might some time see fit to tell me, and then she referred again to a shadow which was hanging over the family, and which made her morbid, she supposed. I had no idea what the shadow was, or what connection it had with my going to Grantley Montague's reception, but I was glad she was making even a slight apology for what seemed to me so unjust. She was much pleased with the good reports of me, she said, and if I liked I might attend a famous opera which she heard was soon to be in Boston, and I could have one of those long wraps trimmed with fur such as young girls wore to evening entertainments, and a new silk dress, if I needed it. That was very kind, and Mabel, to whom I showed the letter, declared that the dragon must have met with a change of heart.

"I'd go to the opera," she said, "and I'd have the wrap trimmed with light fur, and the gown a grayish blue, just the color of your eyes when you are excited. There are some lovely patterns at Jordan & Marsh's, and sister Clara will help you pick it out, and we'll have a box and go with Clara, and I'll do your hair beautifully, and you'll see how many glasses will be leveled at you."

Mabel was always comforting and enthusiastic, and I began to feel a good deal of interest in the box and the dress and the wrap and the opera, which I enjoyed immensely, and where so many glasses were turned towards me that my cheeks burned as if I were a culprit caught in some wrong act. But there was something lacking, and that was Grantley Montague, whom I fully expected to see. Neither he nor Thea was there, and I heard afterwards that she was ill with a cold and had

written a pathetic note, begging him not to go and enjoy himself when she was feeling so badly and crying on her pillow, with her nose a sight to behold. Mabel's brother, who reported this to her, added that when Grantley read the note he gave a mild little swear and said he reckoned he should go if he liked. But he didn't, and I neither saw him then, nor any time afterwards, except in the distance, during my stay at Wellesley.

He was graduated the next summer, and left for Kentucky, with the reputation of a fair scholar and a first rate fellow who had spent quite a fortune during his college course. Thea Haynes also left Madame's, where she said she had learned nothing, generously adding, however, that it was not the fault of her teachers, but because she didn't try. Some time during the next autumn I heard that she had gone to Europe with her guardian and maid and a middle-aged governess who acted as chaperon, and that Grantley Montague was soon to join her in a trip to Egypt. After that I knew no more of them except as Mabel occasionally told me what she heard from her brother, who had also left Harvard and was in San Francisco. To him Grantley wrote in February that he was with the Haynes party, which had been increased by a second or third cousin of Thea's, a certain Aleck Grady, who was a crank, and perfectly daft on the subject of a family tree and the missing link in the Hepburn line.

"If he finds the missing link," Fred wrote to his sister, "Grant says it will take quite a fortune from Thea, or himself, or both ; and he seems to be a little anxious about the link which Aleck Grady is trying to

find. I don't know what it means. Think I'll ask him to explain more definitely when I write him again."

Neither Mabel nor I could hazard a guess with regard to the missing link or the Hepburn line, and I soon forgot them entirely in the excitement of preparing for my graduation, which was not very far away. I had hoped that one of my aunts at least would be present, and had written to that effect to Aunt Keziah, telling her how lonely it would be for me with no relative present, and how earnestly I wished that either she or Aunt Desire or Aunt Beriah would come. I even went so far as to thank her for all she had done for me and to tell her how sorry I was for the saucy letter I wrote to her six years ago. I had often wanted to do this, but had never quite made up my mind to it until now, when I hoped it might bring me a favorable response. But I was mistaken.

It was not possible for herself or either of her sisters to come so far, she wrote. She appreciated my wish to have her there, she said, and did not esteem me less for it. But it could not be. She enclosed money for my graduating dress, and also for my traveling expenses, for after a brief rest in Meadowbrook I was going to Morton Park, in charge of a merchant from Frankfort, who would be in New York in July and would meet me in Albany. And so, with no relative present to encourage me or be proud of me, I received my diploma and more flowers than I knew what to do with, and compliments enough to turn my head, and then, amid tears and kisses and good wishes, bade farewell to my girl friends and teachers, one of whom said to me at parting: "If all our pupils were like you, Wellesley would be a Paradise."

A model in every respect they called me, and it was with quite a high opinion of myself that I went to Meadowbrook, where I spent a week, and then, bidding a tearful good-bye to the friends who had been so kind to me, I joined Mr. Jones at Albany, and was soon on my way to Kentucky.

CHAPTER IV.—Grantley Montague's Story.

ALECK AND THEA.

Hotel Chapman, Florence, April —, 18—.

Nearly everybody keeps a diary at some time in his life, I think. Aunt Brier does, I know, and Thea, and Aleck,—confound him, with his Hepburn lines and missing links!—and so I may as well be in fashion and commence one, even if I tear it up, as I probably shall. Well, here we are in Florence, and likely to be until Thea is able to travel. Why did she go tearing around Rome night and day in all sorts of weather, spooning it in the Coliseum by moonlight and declaring she was *oh, so hot*, when my teeth were chattering with cold, and I could see nothing in the beauty she raved about but some old broken walls and arches, with shadows here and there, which did not look half as pretty as the shadows in the park at home? Europe hasn't panned out exactly as I thought it would, and I am getting confoundedly bored. Thea is nice, of course,—too nice, in fact,—but a fellow does not want to be compelled to marry a girl any way. He'd rather have some choice in the matter,

which I haven't had ; but I like Thea immensely, and we are engaged.

There, I've blurted it out, and it looks first-rate on paper, too. Yes, we are engaged, and this is how it happened. Ever since I was knee-high Aunt Keziah has dinged it into me that I must marry Thea, or her heart would be broken, and the Mortons beggared. I wish old Amos Hepburn's hand had been paralyzed before he added to that long lease a condition which has brought grief to my Uncle Douglas and cousin Gerold, who married an actress, or a cook, or something, because he loved her more than he did money. By George, I respect him for his independence, and wish I were more like him, and not a lazy, good-for-nothing fellow who does not know how to do a single useful thing or to earn a dollar.

Well, the time is drawing near for that lease to expire, and unless a direct heir of Joseph Morton, my great-grandfather, marries a direct heir of Amos Hepburn, the entire Morton estate will revert to the Hepburn heir. Now, I am a direct heir of Joseph Morton, and Thea is old Hepburn's direct heir, which means, according to the way it was explained in the lease, that she is the eldest child, whether son or daughter, of the eldest child, and so on back to the beginning, when there were three daughters of old Amos. Thea comes from the second of these daughters, for where the first one is the Lord only knows. Aleck Grady descends from old Amos's third daughter, and has no chance while Thea lives. Nor does he pretend to want any, as he has money enough of his own. He joined our party uninvited in Egypt, and has bored us to death with his family tree, and the missing link, which link means

the eldest daughter of old Hepburn, of whom nothing is known after a certain date. And it is she and her descendants, if there are any, he is trying to hunt up. He is a shrewd fellow, and a kind of quack lawyer, too, and once told me that he did not think the long lease would hold water a minute in the United States, and asked if Aunt Keziah had consulted a first-class lawyer, and when I told him that she had not,—that it had been a rule in our family not to talk about the lease to any one until compelled to do so, and that even if she knew the document was invalid she would consider herself bound in honor to respect it as her father had done before her and enjoined her to do,—he shrugged his shoulders and said, "*Chacun à son goût;* but I should dispute that lease inch by inch, and beat the Hepburns too."

"Why, then," I asked, "are you so anxious to find the *missing link*, as you call it? I always supposed that for some reason you wanted to throw Thea out of the property."

With that insinuating smile of his which Thea thinks so winning and I think so disgusting, he replied, "My dear fellow, how you mistake me! I don't care a picayune who gets the Morton money, if you are fools enough to give it up. But I do care for my ancestors; in fact, I have a real affection for my great-aunt Octavia, and am most anxious to know what became of her and her progeny. I have her as far as New York, where all trace of her is lost. Would you like to see the family tree?"

As I had seen it half a dozen times and knew exactly where Octavia failed to connect, I declined, and then the conversation turned upon Thea, who, Aleck said,

was a very nice girl, but a little too fast, and had about her too much gush and too much powder to suit him. It was strange why girls would gush and giggle and plaster their faces with cosmetics and blacken their eyebrows until they looked like women of the town, he said, appealing to me for confirmation of his opinion. I had more than half suspected him of designs on Thea, and I flamed up at once in her defense, telling him she neither gushed, nor powdered, nor blackened,—three lies, as I knew,—but I was angry, and when, with that imperturbable good humor which never fails him, he continued : " Don't get so mad, I beg. I am older than you, and know human nature better than you do, and I know you pretty well. Why, I've made you quite a study. Thea, in spite of her powder and gush, is a splendid girl, and will make a good wife to the man she loves and who loves her, but she is not your ideal, and pardon me for suggesting that I don't believe that you would marry her if it were not for that clause about the eldest heir, which I don't think is worth the paper it is written on,"—I could have knocked him down, he was so cool and patronizing, and was also telling me a good deal of truth. But I would not admit it, and insisted that I would marry Thea if there had never been any Hepburn line and she had not a dollar in the world.

" Why don't you propose, then, and done with it? She is dying to have you," he said, and I declared I would, and that night I asked her to be my wife, and I have not regretted it either, although I know she is not my ideal.

But who is my ideal, and where is she, if I have one? I am sure I don't know, unless it is the owner of a face which I have seen but twice, but which comes back to

me over and over again, and which I would not forget if I could, and could not if I would. The first time I saw it was at a concert in Boston, not long before I left college. I was in the dress-circle, and diagonally to my right was an immense bonnet or hat which hid half the audience from me. Late in the evening it moved, and I saw beyond it a face which has haunted me ever since. It was that of a young and beautiful girl, who I instinctively felt belonged to a type entirely different from the class of girls whom I had known while at Harvard, and who, without being exactly fast in the worst acceptation of the term, had come so near the boundary-line between propriety and impropriety that it was difficult to tell on which side they stood. But this girl was different, with her deep-blue eyes and her wavy hair which I was sure had never come in contact with the hot curling-tongs, as Thea's does, while her complexion, which reminded me of the roses and lilies in Aunt Keziah's garden, owed none of its brilliancy to cosmetics, as Aleck says most complexions do. She was real, and inexpressibly lovely, especially when she smiled, as she sometimes did upon the lady who sat beside her, and who might have been her mother, or her chaperon, or some elderly relative. When the concert was over I hurried out, hoping to get near her, but she was lost in the crowd, and I only saw her once again, three weeks later, in an open street-car going in the opposite direction from the one in which I was seated. In her hand she held a paper parcel, which made me think she might possibly be a seamstress or a saleslady, and I spent a great deal of time haunting the establishments in Boston which employed girls as clerks, but I never found her, nor heard of her. She certainly was not at Moisiere's

and I don't think she was at Wellesley, as I am sure I should have heard of her through Fred, who had a sister there. Once I thought I would tell him about her, but was kept from doing so by a wish to discover her myself, and when discovered to keep her to myself. But I have never seen her since the day she went riding so serenely past me, unconscious of the admiration and strange emotions she was exciting in me. Who was she, I wonder; and shall I ever see her again? It is not likely; and if I do, what can it matter to me, now that I am engaged to Thea?

In her letter of congratulation Aunt Keziah, who was wild with delight, wrote to me that nothing could make her so happy as my marriage with Thea, and that she knew I would keep my promise, no matter whom I might meet, for no one of Morton blood ever proved untrue to the woman he loved. Of course I shall prove true; and who is there to meet, unless it is my Lost Star, as I call her, for whom I believe I am as persistently searching as Aleck is for the missing link, for I never see a group of young American girls that I do not manage to get near enough to see if she is among them, and I never see a head of chestnut-brown hair set on shoulders just as hers was that I don't follow it until I see the face, which as yet has not been hers. And in this I am not disloyal to Thea, whom I love better than any girl I have ever known, and whom I will make happy, if possible. She has been ill now nearly four weeks, but in a few days we hope to move on to Paris, where we shall stay until June, then go to Switzerland, and some time in the autumn sail for home, and the aunts who have vied with each other in spoiling me and are the dearest aunts in the world, although so unlike

each other,—Aunt Keziah, with her iron will but really kind heart, Aunt Dizzy, with her invalid airs and pretty youthful ways which suit her so well in spite of her years, and Aunt Brier, whose name is a misnomer, she is so soft and gentle, with nothing scratchy about her, and who has such a sad, sweet face, with a look in her brown eyes as if she were always waiting or listening for something. I believe she has a history, and that it is in some way connected with that queer chap, Bey Atkins they called him, whose dress was half Oriental and half European, and whom I met at Shepheard's in Cairo. I first saw him the night after our return from the trip up the Nile. He registered just after I had written the names of our party, at which he looked a long time, and then fairly shadowed me until he had a chance to speak to me alone. It was after dinner, and we were sitting near each other in front of the hotel, when he began to talk to me, and in an inconceivably short space of time had learned who I was, and where I lived, and about my aunts, in whom he seemed so greatly interested, especially Aunt Brier, that I finally asked if he had ever been to Morton Park.

"Yes," he answered, knocking the ashes from his cigar and leaning back in the bamboo chair in the graceful, lounging way he has,—"yes, years ago I was in Versailles and visited at Morton Park. Your aunt Beriah and I were great friends. Tell her when you go home that you saw Tom Atkins in Cairo, and that he has become a kind of wandering Ishmael and wears a red fez and white flannel suit. Tell her, too ——" but here he stopped suddenly, and, rising, went into the street, where his dragoman was holding the white

donkey he always rode, sometimes alone and sometimes with a little girl beside him, who called him father.

Of course, then, he is married, and his wife must be an Arab, for the child was certainly of that race, with her great dark eyes and her tawny hair all in a tangle. I meant to ask him about her, but when next day I inquired for him, I was told that he had gone to his home near Alexandria, where, I dare say, there is a host of little Arabs, and a woman with a veil stretched across her nose, whom he calls his wife.

Alas for Aunt Brier if my conjecture is right!

CHAPTER V.—Beriah's Story.

DORIS AND THE GLORY HOLE.

It is a long time since I have opened my journal, for there is so little to record. Life at Morton Park goes on in the same monotonous routine, with no change except of servants, of which we have had a sufficiency ever since the negroes became "ekels," as our last importation from Louisville, who rejoiced in the high-sounding name of Helena Maude, informed us they were. Such things make Keziah furious, for she is a regular fire-eater, but I shall admit their equality provided they spare my best bonnet and do not insist upon putting their knives into our butter. Helena Maude is a pretty good girl, and when some of her friends come to the front door and ask if Miss Smithson lives here I tell them yes, and send them round to the cabins and

say nothing to Keziah, who for the last few weeks has been wholly absorbed in other matters than colored gentry.

Doris is coming home to-morrow, and just the thought of it makes me so nervous with gladness that I can scarcely write legibly. I think it was a struggle for Keziah to consent to her coming, and she only did so after she heard Grant was engaged to Dorothea. I never saw Keziah as happy as she was upon the receipt of Grant's letter, for his marriage with Dorothea means keeping our old home, and she allowed Helena Maude to whistle "Marching Through Georgia" as she cleared the table, and did not reprove her. It was soon after this that she announced her intention to bring Doris to Morton Park after her graduation, and that night Dizzy and I held a kind of jubilee in our sitting-room, we were so glad that at last Gerold's daughter was coming to her father's old home.

We need young blood here to keep us from stagnating, and although Grantley will be with us in the autumn, and possibly Dorothea, we know what they are, and are anxious for something new and fresh and pretty like Doris. I have a photograph of her, and it stands before me as I write, a picture of a wondrously beautiful young girl, with great earnest eyes confronting mine so steadfastly, and masses of soft, natural curls all over her head after the fashion of the present day. I know they are natural, although Keziah says they are the result of hot tongs, and that she shall stop it at once, for she will not have the gas turned on half the time while the irons are heating. That is Dorothea's style; but she is in the Hepburn line, and is to marry Grant, which makes a difference.

Doris sent such a nice letter to Keziah, asking pardon for the saucy things she wrote to her years ago, and begging that some one of us would come to see her graduated. How I wanted to go ! but Keziah said we could not afford it, as she intended buying a new upright Steinway in place of the old spindle-legged thing on which she used to thrum when a girl. We have heard that Doris is a fine musician, but Keziah will not admit that the piano was bought for her. Dorothea will visit us in the autumn, she says, and she wishes to make it as pleasant as possible for her. Dizzy and I both know what Dorothea's playing is like, and that it does not matter much whether it is on a Steinway or a tin pan, but we are glad for something modern in our ancient drawing-room, where every article of furniture is nearly as old as I am, and where the new Steinway is now standing with one of Keziah's shawls thrown over it to keep it from the dust.

For once in our lives Dizzy and I have waged a fierce battle with Keziah, who came off victor as usual. The battle was over Doris's room, which Keziah thinks is of little consequence. Looking at our house from the outside, one would say it was large enough to accommodate a dozen school-girls ; but looks are deceptive, and it seems it can hardly accommodate one. There is a broad piazza in front, and through the centre a long and wide hall, after the fashion of most Southern houses. On the south side of the hall are the drawing-room and sitting-room, with fireplaces in each. On the north side are the dining-room and Keziah's sleeping-room, where she usually sits and receives her intimate friends. On the floor above are also four rooms,— Dizzy's and mine, which open together on the north side

of the hall, and on the other side Grantley's, and the guest-room, which has not been occupied in fifteen years, for when Dorothea is here she has always had a cot in my room or Dizzy's. At the end of the hall is a small room, ten by twelve perhaps, and communicating with the guest-chamber, for which it was orginally intended as a dressing-room, but which we use as a store-room for a most heterogeneous mass of rubbish, such as broken chairs and stands and trunks and chests, and old clothes and warming-pans and water-bags and Grantley's fishing-tackle. The Glory Hole, we call it, though what the name has to do with the room I have no idea. There is a tradition that Gerold, when he first looked into it, exclaimed, "Oh, glory, what a hole!" and hence the name, which clung to it even after it was cleared of its rubbish for him, for he once occupied it when a little boy, and now it is to be his daughter's.

Dizzy and I pleaded for the large guest-chamber, but Keziah said that was reserved for Dorothea who, as an engaged young lady, was too old to sleep in a cot. And nothing we could say was of any avail to turn her from her purpose. The Glory Hole was good enough for the daughter of a cook, she said, and so the room has been emptied of its contents, and, except that it is so small, it is quite presentable, with its matting and muslin hangings and willow chair and table by the window, under which there is a box of flowers, as one often sees in London. Just where she will put her trunk or hang her dresses I don't know,—possibly in my closet, which is large enough for us both. She will be here to-morrow afternoon, and Keziah is nearly ill with dread of her coming, and worrying as to what she will be like, and whether she will bring a banjo, and worst of all, if

she will want to ride a bicycle! This bicycle-riding is in Kizzy's mind the most disreputable thing a woman can do, and the sight of a girl on a wheel, or a boy either, for that matter, is like a red flag to a bull, especially since the riders have taken to the sidewalks. She will never turn out, she declares, and I have seen her stand like a rock and face the enemy bearing down upon her, and once she raised her umbrella with a hiss and a shoo, as if she were scaring chickens. I dare say Thea will have one as soon as she lands in America, but for Doris there are no bicycles, or banjoes, or hot irons,—nothing but the Glory Hole. Poor little Doris!

I hope she will be happy with us, and I know I am glad because she is coming. So few have ever come home to make me glad, and the one who could make me the gladdest will never come again, for somewhere in the wide world the sun is shining on his grave, I am sure, or he would come back to me, and I should bid him stay, or rather go with him, whether to the sands of Arabia or to the shores of the Arctic Sea. My hair is growing gray, the bloom has faded from my cheek, and I shall be forty-four my next birthday, and it is twenty-four years since I saw Tom; but a woman's love at forty-four is just as strong, I think, as a girl's at twenty, and there is scarcely a night that I do not hear in my dreams the peculiar whistle with which he used to summon me to our trysting-place after Kizzy had forbidden him the house, and I see again his great, dark eyes full of entreaty and love, and hear his voice urging me to do what, if it were to do over again, I would do. That is an oddly-worded sentence; but I am too tired to change it, and will close my journal until after I have seen Doris.

CHAPTER VI.—Doris's Story.

MORTON PARK.

I have been here four weeks, and begin to feel quite like the daughter of the house, with some exceptions. I am in love with Aunt Beriah, very intimate with Aunt Desire, and not as much in awe of Aunt Keziah as I was at first. It was a lovely afternoon when the coach from Frankfort set me down at the gate to the Morton grounds, where a little, brown-eyed, brown-haired lady was waiting for me. She had one of the sweetest faces I ever saw, and one of the sweetest voices, too, as she came towards me, holding out both her soft white hands, and saying to me, "I am sure you are Doris, and I am your aunt Beriah. Welcome to Morton Park!"

It was not so much what she said as the way she said it, which stirred me so strangely. It was the first word of affection I had heard from my own kin since my mother died, and, taking her hands in mine, I kissed them passionately, and cried like a child. I think she cried a little, too, but am not sure. I only know that she put her arm around my neck and said, soothingly, "There, there, dear. Don't cry, when I am so glad."

Then taking my bag and umbrella, she gave them to a colored girl, whom she called Vine, and who, after bobbing me a courtesy, disappeared through the gateway.

"It is not far, and I thought you would like to walk," Aunt Brier said, leading the way, while I followed her

into the park, at the rear of which stood the house, with its white walls and Corinthian pillars, looking so cool and pleasant in the midst of grass and flowers and maples and elms, with an immense hawthorn-tree in full bloom.

"Oh, this is lovely, and just as papa told me it was," I exclaimed, and then, stopping short, Aunt Brier drew me close to her, and scrutinizing me earnestly, said, with a tremor in her voice, "Yes, Gerold told you of his old home. I was so fond of him. We were like brother and sister, and I was so sorry when he died. You are not as much like him as I fancied you were from your photograph."

"No?" I said, interrogatively, wondering if she were disappointed in me; but she soon set me right on that point by saying, "Gerold was good-looking, but you are beautiful."

I had been told that so often, and I knew it so well without being told, that I did not feel at all elated. I was only glad that she liked my looks, and replied, "And you are lovely, and so young, too. My great aunt ought to look older."

She smiled at that, and said, "I am nearly forty-four, and feel sometimes as if I were a hundred. But there is Kizzy on the piazza. I think we'd better hurry. She does not like to wait for anything."

I had never really known what fear of any person was, but I felt it now, and my heart beat violently as I hastened my steps towards the spot where Aunt Keziah stood, stiff and tall and straight, and looking very imposing in her black silk gown and lace cap set on a smooth band of false hair, a bunch of keys dangling at her belt, and a dainty hemstitched handkerchief clasped

in her hands. In spite of her sixty odd years, she was a handsome woman to look at, with her shoulders thrown back and her chin in the air as if she were on the alert and the defensive. Her features were clearly cut, her face smooth and pale, while her bright black eyes seemed to look me through as they traveled rapidly from my hat to my boots and back again, evidently taking in every detail of my dress, and resting finally on my face with what seemed to be disapproval.

"How do you do, Miss Doris?" she said, with a quick shutting together of her thin lips, and without the shadow of a smile.

I had cried when Aunt Brier spoke to me, but I did not want to cry now, for something of the woman's nature must have communicated itself to mine and frozen me into a figure as hard and stiff as she was. It was a trick of mine to imitate any motion or gesture which struck me forcibly, and I involuntarily threw my shoulders back and my chin in the air, and gave her two fingers just as she had given me, and told her I was quite well, and hoped she was the same. For a moment she looked at me curiously, while it seemed to me that her features did relax a little as she asked if I were not very tired with the journey and the dusty ride in the coach from Frankfort.

"It always upsets me," she said, suggesting that I go at once to my room and rest until dinner, which would be served sharp at six, "and," she added, "we never wait for meals; breakfast at half-past seven in the summer, lunch at half-past twelve, dinner at six."

Then she made a stately bow, and I felt that I was dismissed from her presence, and started to follow Aunt Beriah into the hall just as two negroes came up

the walk bringing one of my trunks, which had been deposited at the entrance to the park.

"Mass'r Hinton's man done fotchin' t'other trunk on his barrer," the taller negro said, in response to a look of inquiry he must have seen on my face, and instantly Aunt Kizzy's lips came together just as they had done when she said, "How do you do, Miss Doris?"

"Two trunks?" she asked, in a tone which told me that I had brought altogether too much luggage.

"Yes," I replied, stopping until the negroes came up the steps. "Perhaps I ought to have brought but one, but I have so many books and things, and, besides, one trunk was father's and one mother's, and I could not give either up. This was father's, which he said you gave him when he went to college. See, here is his name." And I pointed to "Gerald Morton, Versailles, Ky.," on the end of the stout leather trunk, which had withstood the wear of years.

"Yes, I remember it," she said, in a voice so changed and with so different an expression on her face that I scarcely knew her as she bent over the trunk, which she touched caressingly with her hand. "You have kept it well," she continued; then, to the negroes, "Take it upstairs, and mind you don't mar the wall nor the banisters. Look sharp, now."

"Mass'r Hinton's man" had arrived with the wheelbarrow and the other trunk, a huge Saratoga, with mother's name upon it, "Doris Morton, New Haven, Ct.," but this Aunt Keziah did not touch. Indeed, it seemed to me that she recoiled from it, and there was an added severity in her tone as she told the man to be careful, and chided him for cutting up the gravel with the wheelbarrow.

"I's couldn't tote it, missis; it's too heavy," he said, as he waited for one of the other blacks to help him take it up the stairs.

I had reached the upper hall and was standing by the door of my room, while Aunt Beriah said, apologetically, "I am sorry it is so small: perhaps we can change it bye-and-bye."

It was really a very pretty room, but quite too small for my trunks unless I moved out either the bedstead, or the bureau, or the washstand, and, as I could not well dispense with either of these, I looked rather ruefully at my aunt, who said, "There is a big closet in my room where you can hang your dresses and put both your trunks when they are unpacked." And that was where I did put them, but not until after two days, for I awoke the next morning with the worst headache I ever had in my life, and which, I suppose, was induced by the long and rapid journey from Meadowbrook, added to homesickness and crying myself to sleep. I could not even sit up, and was compelled to keep my room, where Aunt Beriah nursed me so tenderly and lovingly, while Aunt Kizzy came three times a day to ask how I was, and where I first saw my aunt Desire, who had been suffering with neuralgia and was not present at dinner on the night of my arrival. She sent me her love, however, and the next day came into my room, languid and graceful, with a pretty air of invalidism about her, and a good deal of powder on her face, reminding me of a beautiful ball-dress which has done service through several seasons and been turned and made over and freshened up until it looks almost as well as new. Her dress, of some soft, cream-colored material was artistically draped around her fine figure

and fastened on the left side with a ribbon bow of baby blue, and her fair hair, in which there was very little gray, was worn low on her neck in a large, flat knot, from which a few curls were escaping and adding to her youthful appearance. If I had not known that she was over fifty, I might, in my darkened room, easily have mistaken her for a young girl, and I told her so when after kissing me and telling me who she was, she sank into the rocking-chair and asked me if she looked at all as I thought she would.

With a merry laugh, which showed her white, even teeth, she said, "I like that. I like to look young, if I am fifty, which I will confess to you just because Kizzy will be sure to tell you; otherwise, torture could not wring it from me. A woman is as old as she feels, and I feel about twenty-five. Nor do I think it is necessary to blurt out my age all the time, as Kizzy does. It's no crime to be old, but public opinion and women themselves have made it so. Let two of them get to saying nasty things about a third, and they are sure to add several years to her age, while even men call a girl right old before she is thirty, and doesn't that prove that although age may be honorable it is not desirable, and should be fought against as long as possible? And I intend to fight it, too, and thus far have succeeded pretty well, or should, if it were not for Kizzy, who has the most aggravating way of saying to me, 'You ought not to do so at your time of life,' and 'at your age,' as if I were a hundred."

I listened to her in amazement and admiration too. She was so pretty and graceful and earnest that although I thought her rather silly, and wished that in her fight against time she did not make up quite so

much as I knew she did, I was greatly drawn towards her, and for a while forgot my headache as she told me of her ailments, which were legion, and with which Aunt Kizzy had little sympathy. "Kizzy thinks all one has to do is to exercise his will and make an effort, as Mrs. Chick insisted poor Fanny should do in 'Dombey and Son,'" she said, and then went on to give me glimpses of their family life and bits of family history, all of which were, of course, very interesting to me. Aunt Brier, I heard, had been engaged, when young, to a very fine young man, but Aunt Kizzy broke up the match because she wished Beriah to marry some one in the Hepburn line, which was frightfully tangled up with the Morton line.

"It would take too long to explain the tangle," she said, "and so I shall not try. It estranged your father from us, and his father before him, because each took the woman of his choice in spite of the line."

Then she told me of her own dead love, to whose memory she had been faithful thirty years, and who so often visited her in her dreams that he was as much a reality now as the day he died.

"And that is why I try to keep young, for where he has gone they know no lapse of time, and if he can see me, as I believe he can, I do not want to look old to him," she said, with a pathetic sob, while her white hands worked nervously.

Then she told me that I was in the Glory Hole, which my father had so named, and told me, too, that she and Beriah had fought for the larger room, but had given in to Kizzy, as they always did.

"I believe she has an invisible cat-o'-nine-tails which makes us all afraid of her," she added; "but, really,

when you get down to the kernel it is good as gold, and you can get there if you try, Don't seem afraid of her, or fond of her, either. She hates gush, and she hates cowardice and deceit ; but she adores manner and etiquette as she knew it forty years ago, and dislikes everything modern and new."

She did not tell me all this at one sitting, for she came to see me twice during the two days I kept my bed, and at each visit told me so much that I felt pretty well informed with regard to the family history, and began to lose my dread of Aunt Keziah and to feel less nervous when I heard her quick step and sharp voice in the hall. I knew she meant to be kind, and knew, too, that she was watching me curiously and trying to make up her mind as to what manner of creature I was, and whether I was feigning sickness or not. As she had never had a hard headache in her life, she did not know how to sympathize with one who had, and at the close of the second day she made me understand that mine had lasted long enough and that all I required now was an effort and fresh air, and that she should expect me down to breakfast the next morning. And as I was better, I made the effort, and at precisely half-past seven followed my three aunts down the stairs in a methodical, military kind of way, which reminded me of the school in Meadowbrook, where we used to march to the sound of a drum and a leader's call of " Left, right ; left, right," Aunt Kizzy in this case being the leader and putting her foot down with an energy which marked all her movements.

The table was laid with great care, and Aunt Keziah said grace with her eyes open and upon black Tom, who was slyly purloining a lump of sugar from the bowl on

the sideboard, and who nearly choked himself in his efforts to swallow it in time for his Amen, which was very audible and made me laugh in spite of my fear of Aunt Kizzy. When breakfast was over I was invited into her room, where I underwent a rigid cross-examination as to what I had learned at school, as well as done and left undone. I was also told what I could do and not do at Morton Park. There was a new Steinway in the drawing-room, on which I could practice each day from nine to ten and from three to four, but at no other time unless specially invited. Nor was I to sing unless asked to do so, while humming to myself was out of the question, as something very reprehensible. I was never to cross my feet when I sat down, nor lean back in my chair, nor put my hands upon the table, and above all things she hoped I did not whistle, and had not acquired a taste for banjoes and bicycles, as she heard some young ladies had.

With her sharp eyes upon me I was forced to confess that I could whistle a little and play the banjo, and had only been kept from buying one by lack of means, and also that when in Meadowbrook I had tried to ride a wheel.

"A Morton on a wheel and playing a banjo!" she exclaimed, in horror. "Surely, surely, you did not inherit this low taste from your father's family. It is not the Morton blood which whistles and rides on wheels. It is your ——"

Something in my face must have checked her, for she stopped suddenly and stared at me, while I said, "Aunt Kizzy, I know you mean my mother, and I want to tell you now that in every respect she was my father's equal, and was the sweetest, loveliest woman I

ever saw, and my father was so fond of her. I know you were angry because he married her, and you were very unjust to her, but she never said a word against you, and now she is dead I will hear nothing against her. She was my mother, and I am more like her than like the Mortons, and I am glad of it."

This was not very respectful language, I knew, and I half expected her to box my ears, but she did nothing of the kind, and it seemed to me as if her expression softened towards me as she went on asking questions about other and different matters, and finally dismissed me with the advice that I should lie down awhile, as I looked pale and tired. That was four weeks ago, and since that time I have learned to know her better, and have found many good points which I admire. She has never mentioned my mother to me since that day, but has asked me many questions about my father and our home in Meadowbrook. In most things, too, I have my own way and am very happy, for Aunt Keziah has withdrawn some of her restrictions. I practice now when I like, and sing when I please, and even hum a little to myself, and once, when she was gone, I whistled "Annie Rooney" to my own accompaniment, with Aunts Dizzy and Brier for audience. I have seen a good many of the Versailles people, and have had compliments enough on my beauty to turn any girl's head. I have learned every nook and corner of the house and park, and become quite attached to my Glory Hole, which I really prefer to the great room adjoining it, with its high-post bedstead and canopy, and its stiff mahogany furniture, which Aunt Kizzy says is nearly a hundred years old.

It looks a thousand, as does the furniture in the next room beyond, which puzzles me a little, it smells so like

a man, and a young man, too. By this I mean that there is in it a decided odor of tobacco and cigars, and the leather-covered easy-chair looks to me as if some man had often lounged in it, while I know there are a smoking-jacket and a pair of men's slippers there.

Funny that such things should be in this house of the Vestal Virgins, as I call them, and bye-and-bye I shall get to be one, I suppose, and tend the sacred fires, and go on errands of mercy, unless, indeed, I fall in love and am buried alive, as were the erring Vestals of old, which God forbid.

I wish that room did not bother me as it does. I think it is kept locked most of the time, but two days ago I saw Rache cleaning it, and walked in, as a matter of course, and smelled the cigars, and saw the jacket and the slippers in the closet, and asked Rache whose room it was. She stammers a little, and I could not quite make out what she said ; and just as I was going to repeat my question Aunt Kizzy appeared and with a gesture of her hand waived me from the room, which remains to me as much a mystery as ever. I could, of course, ask one or all of my aunts about it, but by some intuition I seem to know that they do not care to talk about it. Indeed, I have felt ever since I have been here that there is something they are keeping from me, and I believe it is connected with this room, which may have been my father's, or grandfather's, or great-grandfather's, although the smell is very much like the cigars of the Harvard boys, and that smoking-jacket had a modern look. But, whatever the mystery is, I mean in time to find it out.

CHAPTER VII.—KEZIAH'S STORY

A SOLILOQUY.

DORIS is here, and has been for four weeks, and in spite of myself I am drawn to her more and more every day. I did not want her to come, and I meant to be cold and distant to her, but when she looked at me with something in her blue eyes like Gerold, I began to soften, while the sight of Gerold's trunk unnerved me wholly. I gave it to him when he first went away to college, and I remember so well how pleased he was, and how he put his arms around me and kissed me, as he thanked me for it, and said, "Auntie, the trunk is so big that I shall not bring it home at my vacations, but leave it in New Haven. So when you see it again it will be full of honors, and I shall be an A. B., of whom you will be so proud."

God forgive me if I have done wrong; that was twenty-five years ago, and Gerold is dead, and his trunk was brought back to me by his daughter, whose face is not his face, although very, very beautiful. I acknowledge that to myself, and rebel against it a little, as I mentally contrast it with Dorothea's and wonder what Grant will think of it. I have surely done well to keep him from all knowledge of her until he was engaged to Dorothea, and even now I tremble a little for the result when he is thrown in contact with her every day, for aside from her wonderful beauty there is a grace and charm about her that Dorothea lacks, and had I seen her before she came here I should have kept her at the

North until after Grant's marriage, which I mean shall take place as early as Christmas.

He is coming home sooner than I expected; indeed he sails in two or three days, and I must tell her at once that she has a cousin, and in some way put her on her honor not to try to attract him. It is a difficult thing to do, for the girl has a spirit of her own, and there is sometimes a flash in her eyes which I do not like to meet. I saw it first when I said something derogatory of her mother. How her eyes blazed, and how grand she was in her defense, and how I respected her for it!

Ah me, that Hepburn lease! What mischief it has wrought, and how the ghosts of the past haunt me at times, when I remember the stand I have taken to save our house from ruin! Beriah says I am a monomaniac on the subject, and also that she doubts the validity of the lease. But that does not matter. My father bade me respect Amos Hepburn's wishes, and I shall, to the letter, if Grant does not marry Dorothea.

I must stop now and superintend the opening of a box which by some mistake Grant left at Cambridge and did not think necessary to have forwarded to us until recently, when he gave orders to have it sent us by express. It has in it a little of everything, he wrote, and among the rest a picture which he thinks will interest and puzzle us as it has him. I hear Tom hammering at the box, and must go and see to it.

CHAPTER VIII.—Doris's Story.

MY COUSIN GRANTLEY.

I have solved the mystery of that room with the smell of cigars and the smoking-jacket. It does belong to a man, and that man is Grantley Montague, and Grantley Montague is my second cousin. Aunt Kizzy told me all about him this morning, and I am still so dazed and bewildered and glad and indignant that I can scarcely write connectedly about it. Why was the knowledge that Grant was my cousin kept from me so long, and from him, too, as he is still as ignorant as I was a few hours ago? Aunt Kizzy's explanation was very lame. She said if he had known that he had a cousin at Wellesley when he was in Harvard, nothing could have kept him from seeing me so often that we should both have been interrupted in our studies,—that she did not approve of students visiting the girls while they were in school,—and that she hardly knew why she did not tell me as soon as I came here. This was not very satisfactory, and I believe there is something behind; but when I appealed to Aunts Dizzy and Beriah, and said I was hurt and angry, Aunt Brier did not answer at all, but Aunt Dizzy said, "I don't blame you, and I'd have told you long ago if I had not been so afraid of Kizzy;" and that is all I could get from her.

But I know now that Grant is my cousin; and this is how it happened. This morning, as I was crossing the back piazza, I saw Tom opening a box which had come

by express and which Aunt Kizzy was superintending. Taking a seat on the side piazza, I thought no more about it until I heard Aunt Kizzy say, very hurriedly and excitedly, "Go, boy, and call Miss Desire and Miss Beriah,—quick," and a moment after I heard them both exclaim, and caught the sound of my father's name, Gerold. Then I arose, and, going around the corner, saw them bending over a picture which I recognized at once, and in a moment I was kneeling by it and kissing it as I would have kissed my father's hand had it suddenly been reached to me.

"Oh, the picture!" I cried. "It is my father's; he painted it. I saw him do it. He said it was a picture of his aunties, and this is himself. Dear father!" And I touched the face of the young man who was standing behind the woman with the baby in her lap.

Aunt Kizzy was very white; and her voice shook as she asked me to explain, which I did rapidly and clearly, telling all I knew of the picture, which had been sold to some gentleman from Boston for fifty dollars.

"And," I added, "that fifty dollars went to pay his funeral expenses, poor dear father. He was ill so long, and we were so poor."

I was crying, and in fact we were all crying together, Aunt Kizzy the hardest of all, so that the hemstitched handkerchief she always carried so gingerly was quite moist and limp. I was the first to recover myself, and asked:

"How did it get here? Whose box is this?"

"Our nephew's, Grantley Montague, who was graduated at Harvard last year and is now in Europe. He left this box in Cambridge by mistake, and it was not sent to us until yesterday. We are expecting him

home in a short time. He must have bought the picture for its resemblance to us, although he could not have known that it was painted for us."

It was Aunt Kizzy who told me this very rapidly, as if anxious to get it off her mind, and I noticed that she did not look at me as she spoke, and that she seemed embarrassed and anxious to avoid my gaze.

"Grantley Montague,—your nephew! Then he is my cousin!" I exclaimed, while every particular connected with the young man came back to me, and none more distinctly than the telegram, *No*, sent in response to my request that I might attend his tea-party.

I know that my eyes were flashing as they confronted Aunt Kizzy, who stammered out:

"Your second cousin,—yes. Did you happen to see him while at Wellesley?"

She was trying to be very cool, but I was terribly excited, and, losing all fear of her, replied:

"No; you took good care that I should meet no Harvard boys; but I saw Grantley Montague once on the train, and I heard so much about him, but I never dreamed he was my cousin. If I had, nothing would have kept me from him. Did he know I was there?"

"He knows nothing of you whatever," Aunt Kizzy said. "I did not think it best he should as it might have interfered with the studies of you both. He is coming soon, and you will of course make his acquaintance."

I was sitting upon the box and crying bitterly, not only for the humiliation and injustice done to me, but from a sense of all I had lost by not knowing that Grantley was my cousin.

"Why didn't you tell me?" I said, when she asked

why I cried. "It would have made me so happy, and I have been so lonely at times, with no one of my own blood to care for me, and I should have been so proud of him; and when he invited me to his party, why didn't you let me go? I did everything to please you. You did nothing to please me!"

I must have been hysterical, for my voice sounded very loud and unnatural as I reproached her, while she tried to soothe me and explain. But I would not be soothed, and kept on crying until I could cry no longer, and still, in the midst of my pain, I was conscious of a great joy welling up in my heart, as I reflected that Grantley was my cousin, and that I should soon see him in spite of Aunt Kizzy, who, I think, was really sorry for me and did not resent what I said to her. She had me in her room for an hour after lunch, and tried to smooth the matter over.

"You are very pretty," she said, "and Grant is very susceptible to a pretty face, and if he had seen yours he might have paid you attentions which would have turned your head, and perhaps have done you harm as they would have meant nothing. They couldn't mean anything; they must mean nothing."

She was getting more and more excited, and began to walk the floor as she went on:

"I may as well tell you that I dread his coming. He is very magnetic,—with something about him which attracts every one. Your father had it, and your grandfather before him, and Grant has it, and you will be influenced by it, but it must not be. Oh, why did I let you come here, with your fatal beauty, which is sure to work us evil? or, having come, why are you not in the Hepburn line?"

I thought she had gone crazy, and stared at her wonderingly as she continued :

" I can't explain now what I mean, except that Grant *must* marry money, and you have none. You have only your beauty, which is sure to impress him, but it must not be. Promise me, Doris, to be discreet, and not try to attract him,—not try to win his love."

" Aunt Keziah ! What do you take me for !" I exclaimed, indignantly, and she replied :

" Forgive me ; I hardly know what I am saying ; only it must not be. You must not mar my scheme, though if you were in the line, I'd accept you so gladly as Grantley's wife." And then, to my utter amazement, she stooped aad kissed me, for the first time since I had known her.

A great deal more she said to me, and when the interview was over, there was on my mind a confused impression that I was not to interfere with her plan of marrying Grantley to a rich wife,—Dorothea Haynes, probably, although no mention was made of her,—and also that I was to treat him very coldly and not in any way try to attract him. The idea was so ludicrous that after a little it rather amused than displeased me, but did not in the least lessen my desire to see the young man who had been the lion at Harvard, and whom I had seen in the car whistling an accompaniment to Dorothea's banjo.

I have told Aunts Desire and Beriah of that incident, and of nearly all I had heard with regard to Grantley and Dorothea, but the only comment they made was that they had known Miss Haynes since she was a child, that she had visited at Morton Park, and would probably come there again in the autumn. Once I thought

to ask if she were engaged to Grantley, but the wall of reserve which they manage to throw about them when the occasion requires it, kept me silent, and I can only speculate upon it and anticipate the time when I shall stand face to face with Grantley Montague.

CHAPTER IX.—The Author's Story.

GRANTLEY AND DORIS.

It was one of those lovely summer days, neither too hot nor too cold, which sometimes occur in Kentucky even in August. The grounds at Morton Park were looking their best, for there had been a heavy shower the previous night, and since sunrise three negroes had been busy mowing and rolling and pruning and weeding until there was scarcely a twig or dead leaf to be seen upon the velvet lawn, while the air was sweet with the odor of the flowers in the beds and on the broad borders. Mas'r Grantley was expected home on the morrow, and that was incentive enough for the blacks to do their best, for the negroes worshiped their young master, who, while maintaining a proper dignity of manner, was always kind and considerate and even familiar with them to a certain extent. Within doors everything was also ready for the young man. Keziah had indulged in a new cap, Dizzy in a pretty tea-gown, while Beriah had spent her surplus money for a new fur rug for Grant's room, which had been made very bright and attractive with the decorations which had come

with the picture in the box from Cambridge. As for Doris, she had nothing new, nor did she need anything, and she made a very pretty picture in her simple muslin dress and big garden-hat, when about four o'clock she took a book and sauntered down to a summer-house in the rear of the grounds, near the little gate which opened upon the turnpike and was seldom used except when some one of the family wished to go out that way to call upon a neighbor or meet the stage.

Taking a seat in the arbor, Doris was soon so absorbed in her book as not to hear the stage from Frankfort when it stopped at the gate, or to see the tall young man with satchel in one hand and light walking-cane in the other who came up the walk at a rapid rate and quickened his steps when he caught a glimpse of a light dress among the green of the summer-house. Grantley, who had been spending a little time with Dorothea at Wilmot Terrace, which was a mile or more out of Cincinnati, had not intended to come home until the next day, but there had suddenly come over him an intense longing to see his aunts and the old place, which he could not resist, while, to say the truth, he was getting a little tired of constant companionship with Dorothea and wished to get away from her and rest. It was all very well, he said to himself, to be kissed and caressed and made much of by a nice girl for a while, but there was such a thing as too much of it, and a fellow would rather do some of the love-making himself. Dorothea was all right, of course, and he liked her better than any girl he had ever seen, although she was not his ideal, which he should never find. He had given that up, and the Lost Star did not now flit across his memory as often as formerly, although he had not forgotten her,

and still saw at times the face which had shone upon him for a brief moment and then been lost, as he believed, forever. He was not, however, thinking of it now, when, wishing to surprise his aunts, he dismounted from the stage at the gate and came hurrying up the walk,—the short cut to the house. Catching sight of Doris's dress, and thinking it was his aunt Desire, he called out in his loud, cheery voice, "Hello, Aunt Dizzy! You look just like a young girl in that blue gown and big hat with poppies on it. Are you glad to see me?"

In an instant Doris was on her feet and confronting him with the bright color staining her cheeks and a kindling light in her blue eyes as she went forward to meet him. She knew who it was, and, with a bright smile which made his heart beat rapidly, she offered him her hand and said, "I am not your aunt Dizzy, but if you are Grantley Montague I am your cousin, Doris Morton,—Gerald Morton's daughter,—and I am very glad to see you."

For the first time in his life Grantley's speech forsook him. Here was his Lost Star, declaring herself to be his cousin! What did it mean? Dropping his satchel and taking off his soft hat, with which he fanned himself furiously, he exclaimed, "Great Scott! My cousin Doris! Gerold Morton's daughter! I don't understand you. I never knew he had a daughter, or much about him any way. Where have you kept yourself, that I have never seen or heard of you, and why haven't my aunts told me of you?"

He had her hand in his, as he led her back to the summer-house, while she said to him. "A part of the time I have been at Wellesley. I was there when you

were at Harvard, and used to hear a great deal of you, although I never dreamed you were my cousin till I came here."

This took his breath away, and, sitting down beside her, he plied her with questions until he knew all that she knew of her past and why they had been kept apart so long.

"By Jove, I don't like it," he said. "Why, if I had known you were at Wellesley I should have spent half my time on the road between there and Harvard ——"

"And the other half between Harvard and Madame De Moisiere's?" Doris said, archly, as she moved a little from him, for he had a hand on her shoulder now.

"What do you mean?" he asked, quickly, while something of the light faded from his eyes, and the eagerness from his voice.

"I heard a great deal about you from different sources, and about Miss Haynes, too; and I once saw you with her in the train whistling an accompaniment to her banjo," Doris replied.

"The dickens you did!" Grant said, dropping Doris's hand, which he had held so closely.

It is a strange thing to say of an engaged young man that the mention of his betrothed was like a breath of cold wind chilling him suddenly, but it was so in Grant's case. With the Lost Star sitting by him, he had for a moment forgotten Dorothea, whose farewell kiss was only a few hours old.

"The dickens you did! Well, I suppose you thought me an idiot; but what did you think of Dorothea?" he asked, and Doris replied:

"I thought her very nice, and wished I might know

her, for I felt sure I should like her. And she is coming to Morton Park in the autumn. Aunt Brier told me.

"Yes, I believe she is to visit us then," Grant said, without a great deal of enthusiasm, and then, changing the conversation, he began to ask about his aunts, and what Doris thought of them, and if she were happy with them, and when she first heard he was her cousin, and how.

She told him of the box and the picture which had led to the disclosure, and which she had recognized at once.

"And your father was the artist!" he exclaimed. "By Jove, that's funny! How things come round! I found it in a dealer's shop and bought it because it looked so much like my aunts, although I did not really suppose they were the originals, as I never remembered them as they are on the canvas. And that moon-faced baby was meant for me, was it? What did you think of him?"

"I didn't think him very interesting," Doris replied; and then they both laughed, and said the pleasant nothings which two young people who are pleased with each other are apt to say, and on the strength of their cousinship became so confidential and familiar that at the end of half an hour Doris felt that she had known Grant all her life, while he could scarcely have told how he did feel.

Doris's beauty, freshness, and vivacity, so different from what he had been accustomed to in the class of girls he had known, charmed and intoxicated him, while the fact that she was his cousin and the Lost Star bewildered and confused him; and added to this was a feeling of indignation that he had so long been kept in ignorance of her existence.

"I don't like it in Aunt Kizzy, and I mean to tell her so," he said, at last, as he rose to his feet, and, picking up his satchel, went striding up the walk towards the house, with Doris at his side.

It was now nearly six o'clock, and Aunt Kizzy was adjusting her cap and giving sundry other touches to her toilet preparatory to dinner, when, glancing from her window, she saw the young couple as they emerged from a side path, Doris with her sun-hat in her hand and her hair blowing about her glowing face, which was lifted towards Grant, who was looking down at her and talking rapidly. Miss Kizzy knew Doris was pretty, but never had the girl's beauty struck her as it did now, when she saw her with Grant and felt an indefinable foreboding that the Hepburn line was in danger.

"Doris is a flirt, and Grant is no better, and I'll send for Dorothea at once. There is no need to wait until autumn," she said to herself, as she went down stairs and out upon the piazza, where Beriah and Desire were already, for both had seen him from the parlor and had hurried out to meet him.

"Hello, hello, hello," he said to each of the three aunts, as he kissed them affectionately. "I know you didn't expect me," he continued, as, with the trio clinging to him and making much of him, he went into the house,—"I know you didn't expect me so soon, but the fact is I was homesick and wished to see you all and so I came. I hope you are glad. And, I say, why in the name of all that is good didn't you ever tell me I had a cousin,—and at Wellesley, too? And why did you never tell me more of Cousin Gerold, who, it seems, painted that picture of you all? It's awfully queer. Hello, Tom, how

d'ye?" he added, as a woolly head appeared in the doorway and a grinning negro answered:

"Jes' tol'able, thanky, Mas'r Grant. How d'ye yourself?"

Keziah was evidently very glad of this diversion, which turned the conversation away from Doris, who had remained outside, with a feeling that for the present the aunts must have Grant to themselves. How handsome and bright and magnetic he was, and how gay he made the dinner with his jokes and merry laugh! Once, however, it seemed to Doris that a shadow flitted across his face, and that was when Miss Keziah asked after Dorothea.

"Oh, she's right well," he answered, indifferently, and when his aunt continued:

"Didn't she hate to have you leave so abruptly?" he replied, laughingly:

"She paid me the compliment of saying so, but I reckon Aleck Grady will console her for awhile."

"Who is Aleck Grady?" Miss Morton asked, and Grant replied:

"Have I never written you about Aleck Grady? A good fellow enough, but an awful bore, and a second cousin of Thea's, who joined us in Egypt and has been with us ever since."

Beriah had heard of him, but Miss Morton could not recall him, and continued to ask questions about him as if she scented danger from him as well as from Doris. Was he in the Hepburn line and really Thea's cousin, and did she like him?

At the mention of the Hepburn line Grant's face clouded, and he answered rather stiffly:

"He *is* in the Hepburn line, one degree removed

from Thea, and he is hunting for a missing link, which, if found, will knock Thea into a cocked hat."

Miss Morton knew about the missing link herself; indeed, she had once tried to trace it, but had given it up with the conviction that it was extinct, and if she thought so, why, then, it was so, and Aleck Grady would never find it. But he might be dangerous elsewhere, and she repeated her question as to whether Thea liked him or not.

"I dare say,—as her cousin," Grant replied, adding, with a view to tease his aunt, "and she may get up a warmer feeling, for there is no guessing what will happen when a young man is teaching a girl to ride a bicycle, as he is teaching Thea."

"Ride a bicycle! Thea on a bicycle! Thea astride of a wheel!" Miss Morton exclaimed, horrified and aghast at the idea.

Was the world all topsy-turvy, or had she lived so long out of it that she had lost her balance and fallen off? She did not know, and she looked very white and worried, while Grant laughed at her distress and told her how picturesque Thea looked in her blue gown and red shoes and jockey cap, adding:

"And she rides well, too, which is more than can be said of all the girls. But it is of no use to kick at the bicycles; they have come to stay, and I mean to get Doris one as soon as I can. She must not be left out in the cold when Thea and I go racing down the turnpike. She will be splendid on a wheel."

"God forbid!" came with a gasp from the highly scandalized lady, while Doris's eyes shone with a wonderful brilliancy as they looked their thanks at Grant.

With a view to change the conversation, Beriah began

to question Grant of his trip to Egypt, without a suspicion of the deep waters into which she was sailing. After describing some of the excursions on the donkeys, Grant suddenly exclaimed :

"By the way, Aunt Brier, I met an old acquaintance of yours in Cairo, Tom Atkins, who said he used to visit Morton Park. Do you remember him ?"

Beriah was white to the roots of her hair, and her hand shook so that her coffee was spilled upon the damask cloth as she answered, faintly :

"Tom Atkins ? yes, I remember him."

It was Keziah who came to the rescue now by giving the signal to leave the table, and so put an end for the time being to the conversation concerning Tom Atkins ; but that evening, after most of the family had retired, as Grant sat smoking in the moonlight at the end of the piazza, a slender figure clad in a gray wrapper with a white scarf on her head stole up to him and said, very softly and sadly :

"Now, Grant, tell me about Tom."

Grant told her all he knew, and that night Beriah wrote in her diary as follows :

"Tom is alive, and wears a fez and a white flannel suit, and has a little, dark-eyed, tawny-haired girl whom he calls Zaidee. Of course there is or has been an Oriental wife, and Tom is as much lost to me as if he were sleeping in his grave. I am glad he is alive, and think I am glad because of the little girl Zaidee. It is a pretty name, and if she were motherless I know I could love her dearly for Tom's sake, but such happiness is not for me. Ah, well, God knows best."

CHAPTER X.—Doris's Story.

THEA AT MORTON PARK.

Thea is here, and has brought her wheel and her banjo and her pet dog, besides three trunks of clothes. The dog, whom she calls Cheek, has conceived an unaccountable dislike to Aunt Kizzy, at whom he barks so furiously whenever she is in sight that Thea keeps him tied in her room except when she takes him into the grounds for exercise. Even then he is on the lookout for the enemy, and once made a fierce charge at her shawl, which she had left in the summer house and which was not rescued from him until one or two rents had been made in it. Thea laughs, and calls him a bad boy, and puts her arms around Aunt Kizzy's neck and kisses her and tells her she will send Cheek home as soon as she gets a chance, and then she sings "Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay," which she says is all the rage, and she dances the skirt dance with Grant, to whom she is teaching a new step, which shows her pretty feet and ankles and consists mostly of "one-two-three-kick." And they do kick, or Grant does, so high that Aunt Kizzy asks in alarm if that is quite proper, and then Thea kisses her again and calls her "an unsophisticated old darling who doesn't know the ways of the world and must be taught." Her banjo lies round anywhere and everywhere, just as do her hat and her gloves and parasol, and Aunt Kizzy, who is so particular with me, never says a word, but herself picks up after the disorderly girl, who, with Grant, has turned the house upside down and filled it

with laughter and frolic. Her wheel stays at night in a little room at the end of the piazza, with Grant's, for he has one, and with Thea he goes scurrying through the town, sometimes in the street and sometimes on the sidewalk, to the terror of the pedestrians. Thea has already knocked down two negroes and run into the stall of an old apple-woman, who would have brought a suit if Aunt Kizzy had not paid the damages claimed.

What do I think of Thea? I love her, and have loved her from the moment she came up to me so cordially and called me Cousin Doris, and told me Grant had written her all about me, and that because I was at Morton Park she had come earlier than she had intended doing, and had left her old Gardy and Aleck Grady disconsolate. "But," she added, quickly: "Aleck is coming soon, and then it will be jolly with four of us, Grant and you, Aleck and me, and if we can't paint the town red my name is not Thea."

I don't suppose she is really pretty, except her eyes, which are lovely, but her voice is so sweet and her manners so soft and kittenish and pleasing that you never stop to think if she is handsome, but take her as she is and find her charming. She occupies the guest-room of course, and I share it with her, for she insisted at once that my cot be moved in there, so we could "talk nights as late as we pleased." Aunt Kizzy, who does not believe in talking late, and always knocks on the wall if she hears me move in the Glory Hole after half-past nine, objected at first, saying it was more proper for young girls to room alone, but Thea told her that propriety had gone out of fashion with a lot of other stuff, and insisted, until the Glory Hole was abandoned and used only for toilet-purposes.

"Just what it was intended for," Thea said, "and the idea of penning you up there is ridiculous. I know Aunt Kizzy, as I always call her, and know exactly how to manage her."

And she does manage her beautifully, while I look on amazed. The first night after her arrival she invited me into her room, where I found her habited in a crimson dressing-gown, with her hair, which had grown very long, rippling down her back, and a silver-mounted brush in one hand and a hand-glass in the other. There was a light-wood fire on the hearth, for it was raining heavily, and the house was damp and chilly. Drawing a settee rocker before the fire, she made me sit down close by her, and, putting her arm around me and laying my head on her shoulder, she said, "Now, Chickie,—or rather Softie, which suits you better, as you seem just like the kind of girls who are softies,—now let's talk."

"But," I objected, "Aunt Kizzy's room is just below, and it's nearly ten o'clock, and she will hear us and rap."

"Let her rap! I am not afraid of Aunt Kizzy. She never raps me; and if you are so awfully particular, we'll whisper, while I tell you all my secrets, and you tell me yours,—about the boys, I mean. Girls don't count. Tell me of the fellows, and the scrapes you got into at school."

It was in vain that I protested that I had no secrets and knew nothing about fellows or scrapes. She knew better, she said, for no girl could go through any school and not know something about them unless she were a greater softie than I looked to be.

"I was always getting into a scrape, or out of one," she said, "and it was such fun. Why, I never learned a blessed thing,—I didn't go to learn, and I kept the

teachers so stirred up that their lives were a burden to them, and I know they must have made a special thank-offering to some missionary fund when I left. And yet I know they liked me in spite of my pranks. And to think you were stuffing your head with knowledge at Wellesley all the time, and I never knew it, nor Grant either! I tell you he don't like it any better than I do. And Aunt Kizzy's excuse, that you would have neglected your studies if you had known he was at Harvard, is all rubbish. That was not the reason. Do you know what the real one was?"

I said I did not, and with a little laugh she continued, "You *are* a softie, sure enough;" then, pushing me a little from her, she regarded me attentively a moment, and continued, "Do you know how very, very beautiful you are?"

I might have disclaimed such knowledge, if something in her bright, searching eyes had not wrung the truth in part from me, and made me answer, "I have been told so a few times."

"Of course you have," she replied. Who told you?"

"Oh, the girls at Wellesley," I answered, beginning to feel uneasy under the fire of her eyes.

"Humbug!" she exclaimed. "I tell you, girls don't count. I mean boys. What boy has told you you were handsome? Has Grant? Honor bright, has Grant?"

The question was so sudden that I was taken quite aback, while conscious guilt, if I can call it that, added to my embarrassment. It was three weeks since Grant came home, and in that time we had made rapid strides towards something warmer than friendship. We had ridden and driven together for miles around the country, had played and sung together, and walked together

through the spacious grounds, and once when we sat in the summer-house and I had told him of my father's and mother's death and my life in Meadowbrook and Wellesley, and how lonely I had sometimes been because no one cared for me, he had put his arm around me, and, kissing my forehead, had said, "Poor little Dorey! I wish I had known you were at Wellesley. You should never have been lonely;" and then he told me that he had seen me twice in Boston, once at a concert and once in a street-car, and had never forgotten my face, which he thought beautiful, and that he had called me his Lost Star, whom he had looked for so long and found at last. And as he talked I had listened with a heart so full of happiness that I could not speak, although with the happiness there was a pang of remorse when I remembered what Aunt Keziah had said about my not trying to win Grant's love. And I was not trying; the fault, if there were any, was on his side, and probably he meant nothing At all events, the scene in the summer-house was not repeated, and I fancied that Grant's manner after it was somewhat constrained, as if he were a little sorry. But he had kissed me and told me I was beautiful, and when Thea put the question to me direct, I stammered out at last, "Ye-es, Grant thinks I am handsome."

"Of course he does. How can he help it? And I don't mind, even if we are engaged."

"Engaged!" I repeated, and drew back from her a little, for, although I had suspected the engagement, I had never been able to draw from my aunts any allusion to it or admission of it, and I had almost made myself believe that there was none.

But I knew it now, and for a moment I felt as if I

were smothering, while Thea regarded me curiously, but with no jealousy or anger in her gaze.

"You are surprised," she said at last. "Has neither of the aunts told you?"

"No," I replied, "they have not, but I have sometimes suspected it. And I have reason to think that such a marriage would please Aunt Kizzy very much. Let me congratulate you."

"You needn't," she said, a little stiffly. "It is all a made-up affair. Shall I tell you about myself?" And, drawing me close to her again, she told me that at a very early age she became an orphan, with a large fortune as a certainty when she was twenty-one, as she would be at Christmas, and another fortune coming to her in the spring, if she did not marry Grant, and half in case she did. "It's an awful muddle," she continued, "and you can't understand it. I don't either, except that one of my ancestors, old Amos Hepburn, of Keswick, England, made a queer will, or condition, or something, by which the Mortons will lose their home unless I marry Grant, which is not a bad thing to do. I have known him all my life, and like him so much; and it is not a bad thing for him to marry me, either. Better do that than lose his home."

"Would he marry you just for money?" I asked, while the spot on my forehead, which he had kissed, burned so that I thought she must see it.

But she was brushing her long hair and twisting it into braids, and did not look at me as she went on rapidly: "No, I don't think he would marry me for my money unless he liked me some. Aleck wouldn't, and Grant thinks himself vastly superior to Aleck, whom he calls a bore and a crank; and perhaps he is, but he is

very nice,—not handsome like Grant, and not like him in anything. He has reddish hair, and freckles on his nose, and big hands, and wears awful baggy clothes, and scolds me a good deal, which Grant never does, and tells me I am fast and slangy, and that I powder too much. He is my second cousin, you know, and stands next to me in the Hepburn line, and if I should die he would come in for the Morton estate, unless he finds the missing link, as he calls it, which is ahead of us both. I am sure you will like him, and I shall be so glad when he comes. I am not half as silly with him as I am without him, because I am a little afraid of him, and I miss him so much."

As I knew nothing of Aleck, I did not reply, and after a moment, during which she finished braiding her hair and began to do up her bangs in curl-papers, she said, abruptly, "Why don't you speak? Don't you tumble?"

"What *do* you mean?" I asked, and with very expressive gestures of her hands, which she had learned abroad, she exclaimed, "Now, you are not so big a softie as not to know what *tumble* means, and you have been graduated at Wellesley, too! You are greener than I thought, and I give it up. But you just wait till I have coached you awhile, and you'll know what tumble means, and a good many more things of which you never dreamed."

I said I did not like slang,—in short, that I detested it,—and we were having rather a spirited discussion on the subject, and Thea was talking in anything but a whisper, when suddenly there came a tremendous knock on the door, which in response to Thea's prompt "*Entrez*" opened wide and disclosed to view the awful

presence of Aunt Kizzy in her night-cap, without her false piece, felt slippers on her feet, a candle in her hand, and a look of stern disapproval on her face as she addressed herself to me, asking if I knew how late it was, and why I was keeping Thea up.

"She is not keeping me up. I am keeping her. I asked her to come in here, and when she said we should disturb you I told her we would whisper, and we have until I was stupid enough to forget myself. I'm awfully sorry, but Doris is not to blame," Thea explained, generously defending me against Aunt Kizzy, towards whom she moved with a graceful, gliding step, adding, as she put her arm around her neck, "Now go back to bed, that's a dear, and Doris shall go too, and we'll never disturb you again. I wonder if you know how funny you look without your hair!"

I had never suspected Aunt Kizzy of caring much for her personal appearance, but at the mention of her hair she quickly put her hand to her head with a deprecatory look on her face, and without another word walked away, while Thea threw herself into a chair, shaking with laughter and declaring that it was a lark worthy of De Moisiere.

* * * * * *

Four weeks have passed since I made my last entry in my journal, and so much has happened in that time that I feel as if I were years older than I was when Thea came, and, as she expressed it, "took me in hand." I am certainly a great deal wiser than I was, but am neither the better nor the happier for it, and although I know now what *tumble* means, and all the flirtation signs, and a great deal more besides, I detest it all, and

cannot help feeling that the girl who practices such things has lost something from her womanhood which good men prize. Old-maidish Thea calls me, and says I shall never be anything but a *softie.* And still we are great friends, for no one can help loving her, she is so bright and gay and kind. As for Grant, he puzzles me. I have tried to be distant towards him since Thea told me of her engagement, and once I spoke of it to him and asked why he did not tell me himself. I never knew before that Grant could scowl, as he did when he replied, "Oh, bother! there are some things a fellow does not care to talk about, and this is one of them. You and Thea gossip together quite too much."

After that I didn't speak to Grant for two whole days. But he made it up the third day in the summer-house where he had kissed me once, and would have kissed me again, but for an accident.

"Doris," he said, as he took my face between his hands and bent his own so close to it that I felt his breath on my cheek,—"Doris, don't quarrel with me. I can't bear it. I——"

What more he would have said I do not know, as just then we heard Thea's voice near by calling to Aleck Grady, who has been in town three weeks, stopping at the hotel, but spending most of his time at Morton Park, and I like him very much. He seems very plain-looking at first, but after you know him you forget his hair and his freckles and his hands and general awkwardness, and think only how thoroughly good-natured and kind and considerate he is, with a heap of common sense. Thea is not quite the same when he is with us. She is more quiet and ladylike, and does not use so much slang, and acts rather queer, it seems to me.

Indeed, the three of them act queer, and I feel queer and unhappy, although I seem to be so gay, and the house and grounds resound with laughter and merriment all day long. Aleck comes early, and always stays to lunch, if invited, as he often is by Thea, but never by Aunt Kizzy, who has grown haggard and thin and finds a great deal of fault with me because, as she says, I am flirting with Grant and trying to win him from Thea.

It is false. I am not flirting with Grant. I am not trying to win him from Thea, but rather to keep out of his way, which I cannot do, for he is always at my side, and when we go for a walk, or a ride, or a drive, it is Aleck and Thea first, and necessarily Grant is left for me, and, what is very strange, he seems to like it, while I —— Oh, whither am I drifting, and what shall I do? I know now all about the Morton lease and the Hepburn line, for Aunt Kizzy has told me, and with tears streaming down her cheeks has begged me not to be her ruin. And I will not, even if I should love Grant far more than I do now, and should feel surer than I do that he loves me and would gladly be free from Thea, who laughs and sings and dances as gayly as if there were no troubled hearts around her, while Aleck watches her and Grant and me with a quizzical look on his face which makes me furious at times. He has talked to me about the missing link and the family tree, which he offered to show me, but I declined, and said impatiently that I had heard enough about old Amos Hepburn and that wretched condition, and wished both had been in the bottom of the sea before they had done so much mischief. With a good-humored laugh he put up his family tree and told me not to be so hard

on his poor old ancestor, saying he did not think either he or his condition would harm the Mortons much.

I don't know what he meant, and I don't know anything except that I am miserable, and Grant is equally so, and I do not dare stay alone with him a moment, or look in his eyes for fear of what I may see there, or he may see in mine.

Alas for us both, and alas for the Hepburn line!

CHAPTER XI.—The Author's Story.

THE CRISIS.

It came sooner than the two who were watching the progress of affairs expected it, and the two were Kizzy and Dizzy. The first was looking at what she could not help, with a feeling like death in her heart, while the latter felt her youth come back to her as she saw one by one the signs she had once known so well. She knew what Grant's failure to marry Thea meant to them. But she did not worry about it. With all her fear of Keziah, she had a great respect for and confidence in her, and was sure she would manage somehow, no matter whom Grant married. And so in her white gown and blue ribbons she sat upon the wide piazza day after day, and smiled upon the young people, who, recognizing an ally in her, made her a sort of queen around whose throne they gathered, all longing to tell her their secret, except Doris, who, hearing so often from her Aunt Keziah that she was the cause of all the trouble, was very unhappy, and kept away from Grant

as much as possible. But he found her one afternoon in the summer-house looking so inexpressibly sweet, and pathetic, too, with the traces of tears on her face, that, without a thought of the consequences, he sat down beside her, and, putting his arms around her, said :

" My poor little darling, what is the matter, and why do you try to avoid me as you do ?"

There was nothing of the coquette about Doris, and at the sound of Grant's voice speaking to her as he did, and the touch of his hand which had taken hers and was carrying it to his lips, she laid her head on his shoulder and sobbed :

"Oh, Grant, I can't bear it. Aunt Kizzy scolds me so, and I—I can't help it, and I'm going to Meadowbrook to teach or do something, where I shall not trouble any one again."

" No, Doris," Grant said, in a voice more earnest and decided than any she had ever heard from him. " You are not going away from *me*. You are mine and I intend to keep you. I will play a hypocrite's part no longer. I love *you*, and I do not love Thea as a man ought to love the girl he makes his wife, nor as she deserves to be loved ; and even if you refuse me I shall not marry her. It would be a great sin to take her when my whole soul was longing for another."

"Grant, are you crazy ? Don't you know you must marry Thea ? Have you forgotten the Hepburn line ?" Doris said, lifting her head from his shoulder and turning towards him a face which, although bathed in tears, was radiant with the light of a great joy.

Had Grant been in the habit of swearing, he would

probably have consigned the Hepburn line to perdition. As it was, he said :

"Confound the Hepburn line! Enough have been made miserable on account of it, and I don't propose to be added to the number, nor do I believe much in it, either. Aleck does not believe in it at all, and we are going to look up the law without Aunt Kizzy's knowledge. She is so cursed proud and reticent, too, or she would have found out for herself before this time whether we are likely to be beggared or not. And even if the lease holds good, don't you suppose that a great strapping fellow like me can take care of himself and four women ?"

As he had never yet done anything but spend money, it seemed doubtful to Doris whether he could do anything or not. But she did not care. The fact that he loved her, that he held her in his arms and was covering her face with kisses, was enough for the present, and for a few moments Aunt Kizzy's wrath and the Hepburn line were forgotten, while she abandoned herself to her great happiness. Then she remembered, and, releasing herself from Grant, stood up before him and told him that it could not be.

"I am not ashamed to confess that I love you," she said, "and the knowing that you love me will always make me happier. But you are bound to Thea, and I will never separate you from her or bring ruin upon your family. I will go away, as I said, and never come again until you and Thea are married."

She was backing from the summer-house as she talked, and so absorbed were she and Grant both that neither saw nor heard anything until, having reached the door, Doris backed into Thea's arms,

"Hello!" was her characteristic exclamation, as she looked curiously at Doris and then at Grant, who, greatly confused, had risen to his feet. "And so I have caught you," she continued, "and I suppose you think I am angry; but I am not. I am glad, as it makes easier what I am going to tell you. Sit down, Grant, and hear me," she continued authoritatively, as she saw him moving towards the doorway, opposite to where she stood, still holding Doris tightly. "Sit down, and let's have it out, like sensible people who have been mistaken and discovered their mistake in time. I know you love Doris, and I know she loves you, and she just suits you, for she is beautiful and sweet and fresh, while I am neither; I am homely, and fast, and slangy, and sometimes loud and forward."

"Oh, Thea, Thea, you are not all this," Doris cried.

But Thea went on: "Yes, I am; Aleck says so, and he knows, and that is why I like him so much. He tells me my faults straight out, which Grant never did. He simply endured me because he felt that he must, until he saw you, and then it was not in the nature of things that I could keep him any longer. I have seen it, and so has Aleck; and this morning, under the great elm in the far part of the grounds, we came to an understanding, and I told the great, awkward, ugly Aleck that I loved him better than I ever loved Grant; and I do,—I do!"

She was half crying, and breathing hard, and with each breath was severing some link which had bound her to Grant, who for once felt as awkward as Aleck himself, and stood abashed before the young girl who was so boldly declaring her preference for another.

What could he say ? he asked himself. He surely could not remonstrate with her, or protest against what would make him so happy, and so he kept silent, while brushing the tears from her eyes, she continued, "I don't know when it began, or how, only it did begin, and now I don't care how ugly he is, nor how big his feet and hands are. He is just as good as he can be, and I am going to marry him. There !"

She stopped, quite out of breath, and looked at Doris, whose face was very white, and whose voice trembled as she said :

"But, Thea, have you forgotten the *lease ?*"

"The lease !" Thea repeated, bitterly. "I hate the very name. It has worked so much mischief, and all for nothing, Aleck says, and he knows, and don't believe it would stand a moment, and if it does we have arranged for it, and should the Morton estate ever come to me through Aunt Kizzy's foolish insistence, I shall deed it straight back to her, or to you and Grant, which will be better. It is time old Amos Hepburn was euchred, and I am glad to do it. Such trouble as he has brought to your grandfather, your father, and to me, thrusting me upon one who did not care a dime for me !"

"Thea, Thea, you are mistaken. I did care for you until I saw Doris, and I care for you yet," Grant said, and Thea replied :

"In a way, yes. But you were driven to it by Aunt Kizzy, and so was I. Why, I do not remember a time when I did not think I was to marry you, and once I liked the idea, too, and threw myself at your head, and appropriated you in a way which makes me ashamed when I remember it. Aleck has told me, and he knows, and will keep me straight, while you would have let me

run wild, and from a bold, pert, slangy girl I should have degenerated into a coarse, second-class woman, with only money and the Morton name to keep me up. You and Doris exactly suit each other, and your lives will glide along without a ripple, while Aleck's and mine will be stormy at times, for he has a will and I have a temper, but the making up will be grand, and that I should never have known with you. I am going to tell Aunt Kizzy now, and have it over. So, Grant, let's say good-bye to all there has been between us, and if you want to kiss me once in memory of the past you can do so. Doris will not mind."

There was something very pathetic in Thea's manner as she lifted her face for the kiss which was to part her and Grant forever, and for an instant her arms clung tightly around his neck as if the olden love were dying hard in spite of what she had said of Aleck ; then without a word she went swiftly up the walk, leaving Grant and Doris alone.

CHAPTER XII.—Doris's Story.

THE MISSING LINK.

How can I write when my heart is so full that it seems as if it would burst with its load of surprise and happiness? Grant and I are engaged, and so are Thea and Aleck, and of the two I believe Thea is happier than I, who am still so stunned that I can scarcely realize what a few hours have brought to me,—Grant, and —and—a fortune! And this is how it happened.

Grant was saying things to me which I thought he ought not to say, when Thea came suddenly upon us and told us she loved Aleck better than she did Grant, whom she transferred to me in a rather bewildering fashion, while I accepted him on condition that Aunt Kizzy gave her consent. She did not appear at dinner that night, and the next morning she was suffering from a severe headache and kept her room, but sent word that she would see Thea and Grant after breakfast. This left me to Aleck, who came early and asked me to go with him to the summer-house, where we could "talk over the row," as he expressed it. Love had certainly wrought a great change in him, softening and refining his rugged features until he seemed almost handsome as he talked to me of Thea, whom he had fancied from the time he first saw her.

"She is full of faults, I know," he said, "but I believe I love her the better for them, as they will add variety to our lives. She and Grant would have stagnated, as he did not care enough for her to oppose her in any way. Theirs would have been a marriage of convenience; ours will be one of love."

And then he drifted off to the Morton lease and Hepburn line and family tree.

"You have never seen it, I believe," he said, taking from his pocket a sheet of foolscap and spreading it out upon his lap. He had offered to show it to me before, but I had declined examining it. Now, however, I affected to be interested, and glanced indifferently at the sheet, with its queer looking diagrams and rows of names, which he called branches of the Hepburn tree. "I have not made it out quite ship-shape, like one I saw in London lately," he said, taking out his pencil and

pointing to the name which headed the list, "but I think you will understand it. You have no idea what a fascination there has been to me in hunting up my ancestors and wondering what manner of people they were. First, here is Amos Hepburn, the old curmudgeon who leased that property to your grandfather ninety years ago. He married Dorothea Foster, and had three daughters, Octavia, Agrippina, and Poppæa."

"Octavia, Agrippina, and Poppæa," I exclaimed. "What could have induced him to give these names to his daughters?"

"Classical taste, I suppose," Aleck said. "No doubt the old gentleman was fond of Roman history, and the names took his fancy. If he had had a son he would probably have called him Nero. Poppæa, the youngest, is my maternal ancestress. I inherit my beauty from her."

Here he laughed heartily, and then went on:

"Agrippina, the second daughter, was Thea's great-grandmother, and called no doubt after the good Agrippina, and not the bad one, who had that ducking in the sea at the hands of her precious son. As to the eldest daughter, she ought to have felt honored to be named for the poor little abused Empress Octavia; and then it is a pretty name."

"Yes, indeed," I said, "and it is *my* middle name, which my grandmother and my great-grandmother bore before me."

"That's odd," he rejoined, looking curiously at me. "Yes, very odd. Suppose we go over Thea's branch of the tree first, as that is the oldest line to which a direct heir can be found, and consequently gives her the Morton estate. First, Agrippina Hepburn married John

Austin, and had one child, Charlotte Poppæa, who married Tom Haynes, and bore him one daughter, Sophia, and two sons, James and John. This John, by the way, I have heard, was the young man whom Miss Keziah wished your Aunt Beriah to marry, and failing in that she wished your father to marry Sophia. But neither plan worked, for both died, and James married Victoria Snead, of Louisville, and had one daughter, Dorothea Victoria, otherwise Thea, my promised wife, and the great-great-grandaughter of old Amos Hepburn. As I, although several years older than Thea, am in the third and youngest branch of the tree, I have no claim on the Morton estate; neither would Thea have, if I could find the missing link in the first and oldest branch, that of Octavia, who was married in Port Rush, Ireland, to Mr. McMahon, and had twins, Augustus Octavius, and Octavia Augusta. You see she, too, was classically inclined, like her father. Well, Augustus Octavius died, and Octavia Augusta married Henry Gale, a hatter, in Leamington, England, and emigrated to America in 18—, and settled in New York, where all trace of her is lost. Nor can I by any possible means find anything about her, except that Henry Gale died, but whether he left children I do not know. Presumably he did, and their descendants would be the real heirs to the Morton property, if that clause holds good. Do you see the point? or, as Thea would say, do you tumble?"

He repeated his question in a louder tone, as I did not answer him, but sat staring at the unfinished branch of the Hepburn tree. I did tumble nearly off the seat, and only kept myself from doing so entirely by clutching Aleck's arm and holding it so tightly that he winced

a little as he moved away from me, and said: "What's the matter? Has something stung you?"

"No," I replied, with a gasp, and a feeling that I was choking, or fainting, or both.

I had followed him closely through Agrippina's line, and had felt a little bored when he began on Octavia's, but only for an instant, and then I was all attention, and felt my blood prickling in my veins and saw rings of fire dancing before my eyes, as I glanced at the names, as familiar to me as old friends.

"Aleck," I whispered, for I could not speak aloud, "these are all my ancestors, I am sure, for do you think it possible for two Octavias and two McMahons to have been married in Port Rush and had twins whom they called Octavia Augusta and Augustus Octavius, and for Augustus to die and Octavia to marry a Mr. Gale, a hatter, in Leamington, and emigrate to New York?"

It was Aleck's turn now to stare and turn pale, as he exclaimed:

"What do you mean?"

"I mean," I said, "that my great-grandmother's name was Octavia, but I never heard that it was also Hepburn, or if I did I have forgotten it. I know, though, that she married a McMahon and lived at Port Rush. I know, too, that Mrs. McMahon had twins, whose names were Augustus Octavius and Octavia Augusta. Augustus died, but Octavia, who was my grandmother, first married a Mr. Gale, a hatter, in Leamington, and then came to New York, where he died. She then went to Boston, married Charles Wilson, and moved to New Haven, where my mother, Dorothea Augusta, was born, and where she married my father. I have a record of it in an old English

book, which, after my grandmother's death, was sent to my mother with some other things."

"Eureka! I have found the missing link, *and you are it!* Hurrah!" Aleck exclaimed, springing to his feet and catching me up as if I had been a feather's weight. "I was never more surprised in my life, or glad either. To think here is the link right in Miss Kizzy's hands! Wouldn't she have torn her hair if Grant had married Thea? By Jove, it would have been a joke, and a sort of retributive justice, too. I must tell her myself. But first let's be perfectly sure. You spoke of a record. Do you happen to have it with you?"

"Yes, in my trunk," I said, and, excusing myself for a few moments, I flew to the house, and soon returned with what had originally been a blank-book and which my grandmother had used for many purposes, such as recording family expenses, names of people who had boarded with her, and when they came, what they paid her, and when they left; dates, too, of various events in her life, together with receipts for cooking; and pinned to the last page was an old yellow sheet of foolscap, with the name of a Leamington bookseller just discernible upon it. On this sheet were records in two or three different handwritings. The first was the birth in Leamington of Augustus Octavius and Octavia Augusta, children of Patrick and Octavia McMahon, who were married in Port Rush, April 10th, 18—. Then followed the death of Augustus and the marriage of Octavia to William Gale, of Leamington. Then, in my grandmother's handwriting, the death of Mr. Gale in New York, followed by a masculine hand, presumably that of my grandfather, Charles Wilson, who married Mrs. Octavia Gale in Boston, and to whom my mother,

Dorothea Augusta, was born in New Haven. I remember perfectly well seeing my mother record the date of her marriage with my father and of my birth on the sheet of foolscap after it came to her with the other papers from my grandmother, but when or why it was pinned into the blank-book I could not tell. I only knew it was there, and that I had kept the book, which I now handed to Aleck, whose face wore a puzzled look as, opening it at random, he began to read a receipt for ginger snaps.

"What the dickens has this to do with Cæsar Augustus and Augustus Cæsar?" he asked, while I showed him the sheet of paper, which he read very attentively twice, and compared with his family tree. "You *are* the Link, and no mistake!" he said. "Everything fits to a T, as far as my tree goes. Of course it will have to be proven, but that is easily done by beginning at this end and working back to where the branch failed to connect. And now I am going to tell Miss Morton and Grant. Will you come with me?"

"No," I replied, feeling that I had not strength to walk to the house.

I was so confused and stunned and weak that I could only sit still and think of nothing until Grant's arms were around me and he was covering my face with kisses and calling me his darling.

"Aleck has told us the strangest story," he said, "and I am so glad for you, and glad that I asked you to be my wife before I heard it, as you know it is yourself I want, and not what you may or may not bring me. Aunt Kizzy is in an awful collapse,—fainted dead away when she heard it."

"Oh, Grant, how could you leave her and come to

me ?" I asked, reproachfully, and he replied, " Because I could do no good. There were Aunts Dizzy and Brier, and Thea, and Aleck, and Vine, all throwing water and camphor and vinegar in her face, until she looked like a drowned rat. So I came out and left them."

" But I must go to her," I said, and with Grant's arm around me I went slowly to the house and into the room where Aunt Kizzy lay among her pillows, with an expression on her face such as I had never seen before. It was not anger, but rather one of intense relief, as if the tension of years had given way and left every nerve quivering from the long strain, but painless and restful. Thea was fanning her ; Aunt Brier was bathing her forehead with cologne ; Aunt Dizzy was arranging her false piece, which was somewhat awry ; while Aleck was still energetically explaining his family tree and comparing it with the paper I had given him. At sight of me Aunt Kizzy's eyes grew blacker than their wont, while something like a smile flitted across her face as she said, " This is a strange story I have heard, and it will of course have to be proved."

" A task I take upon myself," Aleck interrupted, and she went on to catechise me rather sharply with regard to my ancestors.

" It is strange that your father did not find it out, if he saw this paper."

" He did not see it, for it was not sent to us until after his death," I said, while Aunt Dizzy rejoined, " And if he had it would have conveyed no meaning to him, as I do not suppose he ever troubled himself to trace the Hepburn line to its beginning or knew that Mrs. McMahon was a Hepburn. I have no idea what my great-grandmother's name was before she was married.

For me, I need no confirmation whatever, but accept Doris as I have always accepted her, a dear little girl whose coming to us has brought a blessing with it, and although I am very fond of Thea, and should have loved her as Grant's wife, I am still very glad it is to be Doris."

She was standing by me now, with her hand on my shoulder, while Aunt Brier and Thea both came to my side, the latter throwing her arms around my neck and saying, "And I am glad it is Doris, and that the Hepburn line is torn into shreds. I believe I hate that old Amos, who, by the way, is as much your ancestor as mine, for we are cousins, you know."

She kissed me lovingly, and, putting my hand in Aunt Kizzy's, said to her, "Aren't you glad it is Doris?"

Then Aunt Kizzy did a most extraordinary thing for her. She drew me close to her and cried like a child.

"Yes," she said, "I am glad it is Doris, and sorry that I have been so hard with everybody, first with Beriah, and then with Gerold, whom I loved as if he had been my own son, and who it seems married into the Hepburn line and I did not know it. And I have loved you, too, Doris, more than you guess, notwithstanding I have seemed so cross and cold and crabbed. I have been a monomaniac on the subject of the Hepburn lease. Can you forgive me?"

I could easily answer that question, for with her first kind word all the ill feeling I had ever cherished against her was swept away, and, putting my face to hers, I kissed her more than once, in token of peace between us.

That afternoon Aleck started North with his family tree and my family record, and, beginning at the date

of my mother's marriage, worked backward until the branch which had been broken with the Gales in New York was united with the Wilsons of New Haven, "making a beautiful whole," as he wrote in a letter to Thea, who was to me like a dear sister, and who, with her perfect tact, treated Grant as if they had never been more to each other than friends. Those were very happy days which followed, and now, instead of being the least, I think I am the most considered of all in the household, and in her grave way Aunt Kizzy pets me more than any one else, except, of course, Grant, whose love grows stronger every day, until I sometimes tremble with fear lest my happiness may not last. We are to be married at Christmas time, and are going abroad, and whether I shall ever write again in this journal I cannot tell. Years hence I may perhaps look at it and think how foolish I was ever to have kept it at all. There is Grant calling me to try a new wheel he has bought for me, and I must go. I can ride a wheel now, or do anything I like, and Aunt Kizzy does not object. But I don't think I care to do many things, and, except to please Grant, I do not care much for a wheel, being still, as Thea says, something of a *softie*.

CHAPTER XIII.—Aunt Desire's Story.

THE THREE BRIDES.

I am too old now to commence a diary; but the house is so lonely with only Keziah and myself in it that I must do something, and so I will record briefly the events of the last few weeks, or rather months, since the astounding disclosure that Doris and not Thea was the direct heir in the Hepburn line. Nothing ever broke Keziah up like that, transforming her whole nature and making her quite like other people and so fond of Doris that she could scarcely bear to have her out of sight a moment, and when Grant and Doris were married and gone she cried like a baby, although some of her tears, let us hope, were for Beriah, who will not come back to live with us again, while Doris will.

And right here let me speak of Beriah's little romance, which has ended so happily. Years ago she loved Tom Atkins, but Kizzy separated them, in the hope that Brier would marry John Haynes, of the Hepburn line, as possibly she might have done, for she was mortally afraid of Kizzy. But John had the good taste to die, and Brier remained in single blessedness until she was past forty, when Tom, who she supposed was dead, turned up unexpectedly in Cairo. Grant, who was there at the time, made his acquaintance and brought a message from him to Brier, who, after receiving it, never seemed herself, but sat for hours with her hands folded and a look on her face as if listening or waiting for some one, who came at last.

It was in November, and the maple-leaves were drifting down in great piles of scarlet in the park, and in the woods there was the sound of dropping nuts, and on the hills a smoky light, telling of "the melancholy days, the saddest of the year." But with us there was anything but sadness, for two brides-elect were in the house, Doris and Thea, who were to be married at Christmas, and whose trousseaus were making in Frankfort and Versailles. Thea had expressed a wish to be married at Morton Park on the same day with Doris, and, as her guardian did not object, she was staying with us altogether, while Aleck came every day. So we had a good deal of love-making, and the doors which used to be shut promptly at half-past nine were left open for the young people, who, in different parts of the grounds, or piazza, told over and over again the old story which, no matter how many times it is told, is ever new to her who hears and him who tells it.

One morning when Aleck came as usual, he said to Grant, "By the way, do you remember that chap, half Arab and half American, whom we met in Cairo? Atkins was the name. Well, he arrived at the hotel last night, with that wild-eyed little girl and two Arabian servants, one for him, one for the child. He used to know some of your people, and is coming this morning to call, with his little girl, who is not bad-looking in her English dress."

We had just come from breakfast, and were sitting on the piazza, Grant with Doris, and Brier with that preoccupied look on her face which it had worn so long. But her expression changed suddenly as Aleck talked, and it seemed to me I could see the years roll off from her, leaving her young again; and she was certainly

very pretty when two hours later, in her gray serge gown with its trimmings of navy blue, and her brown hair, just tinged with white, waving softly around her forehead, she went down to meet Tom Atkins, from whom she parted more than twenty years ago. We had him to lunch and we had him to dinner, and we had him finally almost as much as we did Aleck, and I could scarcely walk in any direction that I did not see a pair of lovers, half hidden by shrub or tree.

"'Pears like dey's a love-makin' from mornin' till night, an' de ole ones is wuss dan de young," I heard Adam say to Vine, and I fully concurred with him, for, as if he would make up for lost time, Tom could not go near Brier without taking her hand or putting his arm around her.

Just what he said to her of the past I know not, except that he told her of dreary wanderings in foreign lands, of utter indifference as to whether he lived or died, until in Athens he met a pretty Greek, whom, under a sudden impulse, he made his wife, and who died when their little Zaidee was born, twelve years ago. After that he spent most of his time in Egypt, where he has a palatial home near Alexandria, with at least a dozen servants. Last winter he chanced to meet Grant at Shepheard's Hotel in Cairo, and, learning from him that Beriah was still unmarried, he decided to come home, and, if he found her as unchanged in her feelings as he was, he would ask her a second time to be his wife. So he came, and the vows of old were renewed, and little Zaidee stayed with us altogether, so as to get acquainted with her new mamma that was to be. She is a shy, timid child, who has been thrown mostly with Arabs and Egyptians, but she is very

affectionate, and her love for Beriah was touching in its intensity.

When Thea heard of the engagement she begged for a triple wedding, and carried her point, as she usually does. "A blow-out, too," she said she wanted, as she should never marry but once, and a *blow-out* we had, with four hundred invitations, and people from Cincinnati, Lexington, Louisville, Frankfort, and Versailles. There were lanterns on all the trees in the park, and fireworks on the lawn, and two bands in different parts of the grounds, and the place looked the next morning as if a cyclone or the battle of Gettysburg had swept over it. The brides were lovely, although Doris, of course, bore off the palm for beauty, but Thea was exceedingly pretty, while Beriah reminded me of a Madonna, she looked so sweet and saintly, as she stood by Tom, who, the moment the ceremony was over, just took her in his arms and hugged her before us all Zaidee was her bridesmaid, while Kizzy was Doris's and I was Thea's, and in my cream-colored silk looked, they said, nearly as young as the girls.

The next morning the newly-married people left *en route* for Europe, and the last we heard from them they were at Brindisi, waiting for the Hydaspes, which was to take them to Alexandria. Doris will come back to live with us again in the autumn, but Brier never, and when I think of that, and remember all she was to me, and her patience and gentleness and unselfishness, there is a bitter pain in my heart, and my tears fall so fast that I have blurred this sheet so that no one but myself can read it. I am glad she has Tom at last, although her going from us makes me so lonely and sad and brings back the dreary past and all I lost when

Henry died. But some time, and that not very far in the future, I shall meet my love, dead now so many years that, counting by them I am old, but, reckoned by my feelings, I am still young as he was when he died, and as he will be when he welcomes me inside the gate of the celestial city, and says to me in the voice I remember so well, "I am waiting for you, darling, and now come rest awhile before I show you some of the glories of the heavenly world, and the people who are here, Douglas, and Maria, and Gerold, and all the rest who loved you on earth, and who love you still with a more perfect love, because born of the Master whose name is love eternal."

CHAPTER XIV.—Doris's Story.

TWO YEARS LATER.

It is just two years since that triple wedding, when six people were made as happy as it is possible to be in this world, Aunt Brier and Mr. Atkins, Aleck and Thea, and Grant and myself, on whom no shadow has fallen since I became Grant's wife and basked in the fullness of his love, which grows stronger and more tender as the days go on. He is now studying hard in a law-office in town, determined to fit himself for something useful, and if possible atone for the selfish, useless life he led before we were married. We spent a year abroad, going everywhere with Aleck and Thea, and staying a few weeks in Mr. Atkins's elegant villa near Alexandria,

where everything is done in the most luxurious and Oriental manner, and Aunt Brier was a very queen among her subjects. When the year of travel was ended we came back to Morton Park, where a royal welcome awaited us, and where Aunt Kizzy took me in her arms and cried over me a little and then led me to my room, or rather rooms, one of which was the Glory Hole, which had been fitted up as a boudoir, or dressing-room, while the large, airy chamber adjacent, where Thea used to sleep, had also been thoroughly repaired and refurnished, and was given to us in place of Grant's old room.

And here this Christmas morning I am finishing my journal, in which I have recorded so much of my life,—more, in fact, than I care to read. I wish I had left out a good deal about Aunt Kizzy. She is greatly changed from the grim woman who held me at arm's length when I first came from school, and of whom I stood in fear. We have talked that all over, and made it up, and every day she gives me some new proof of her affection. But the greatest transformation in her came some weeks ago, with the advent of a little boy, who is sleeping in his crib,with a yellow-turbaned negress keeping watch over him. Aunt Kizzy calls herself his grandmother, and tends him more, if possible, than the nurse. Grant laments that it is not a girl, so as to bear some one or two of the queer names of its ancestors. But I am glad it is a boy, and next Sunday it will be christened Gerold Douglas, for my father and grandfather, and Aleck and Thea will stand for it. They have bought a beautiful place a little out of town and have settled down into a regular Darby and Joan, wholly satisfied with each other and lacking nothing to make them perfectly

happy. Aunt Brier and Mr. Atkins are also here, staying in the house until spring, when they will build on a part of the Morton estate which Mr. Atkins has bought of Grant. Oriental life did not suit Aunt Brier, and, as her slighest wish is sacred to her husband, he has brought her to her old home, where, when Aleck and Thea are with us, we make a very merry party, talking of all we have seen in Europe, and sometimes of the Hepburn line, which Aleck says I straightened,—always insisting, however, that it did not need straightening, and that the obnoxious clause in the lease would never have stood the test of the law. Whether it would or not, I do not know, as we have never inquired.

MILDRED'S AMBITION.

CHAPTER I.

MILDRED.

THE time was a hot morning in July, the place one of those little mountain towns between Albany and Pittsfield, and the scene opens in a farm-house kitchen, where Mildred Leach was seated upon the doorstep shelling peas, with her feet braced against the door-jamb to keep her baby brother, who was creeping on the floor, from tumbling out, and her little sister Bessie, who was standing outside, from coming in. On the bed in a room off the kitchen Mildred's mother was lying with a headache, and both the kitchen and the bed-room smelled of camphor and vinegar, and the vegetables which were cooking on the stove and filling the house with the odor which made the girl faint and sick, as she leaned against the door-post and longed, as she always was longing, for some change in her monotonous life. Of the world outside the mountain town where she was born she knew very little, and that little she had learned from Hugh McGregor, the village doctor's son, who

had been away to school, and seen the President and New York and a Cunarder as it came sailing up the harbor. On his return home Hugh had narrated his adventures to Mildred, who listened with kindling eyes and flushed cheeks, exclaiming, when he finished, "Oh! if I could see all that; and I will some day. I shall not stay forever in old Rocky Point. I hate it."

Mildred was only thirteen, and not pretty, as girls usually are at that age. She was thin and sallow, and her great brown eyes were too large for her face, and her thick curly hair too heavy for her head. A mop her brother Tom called it, when trying to tease her; and Mildred hated her hair and hated herself whenever she looked in the ten by twelve glass in her room, and never dreamed of the wonderful beauty which later on she would develop, when her face and form were rounded out, her sallow complexion cleared, and her hair subdued and softened into a mass of waves and curls. Her father, John Leach, was a poor farmer, who, although he owned the house in which he lived, together with a few acres of stony land around it, was in one sense a tenant of Mr. Giles Thornton, the proprietor of Thornton Park, for he rented land enough of him to eke out his slender income. To Mildred, Thornton Park was a Paradise, and nothing she had ever read or heard of equaled it in her estimation, and many a night when she should have been asleep she stood at her window, looking off in the distance at the turrets and towers of the beautiful place which elicited admiration from people much older than herself. To live there would be perfect bliss, she thought, even though she were as great an invalid as its mistress, and as sickly and helpless as little Alice, the only daughter of the

house. Against her own humble surroundings Mildred was in hot rebellion, and was always planning for improvement and change, not only for herself, but for her family, whom she loved devotedly, and to whom she was giving all the strength of her young life. Mrs. Leach was a martyr to headaches, which frequently kept her in bed for days, during which time the care and the work fell upon Mildred, whose shoulders were too slender for the burden they bore.

"But it will be different some time," she was thinking on that hot July morning when she sat shelling peas, sometimes kissing Charlie, whose fat hands were either making havoc with the pods or pulling her hair, and sometimes scolding Bessie for chewing her bonnet strings and soiling her clean apron.

"You must look nice when Mrs. Thornton goes by," she said, for Mrs. Thornton was expected from New York that day, and Mildred was watching for the return of the carriage, which half an hour before had passed on its way to the station.

And very soon it came in sight,—a handsome barouche, drawn by two shining black horses, with a long-coated driver on the box, and Mr. and Mrs. Thornton and the two children inside,—Gerard, a dark, handsome boy of eleven, and Alice, a sickly little girl, with some spinal trouble which kept her from walking or playing as other children did. Leaning back upon cushions was Mrs. Thornton,—her face very pale, and her eyes closed, while opposite her, with his gold-headed cane in his hand, was Mr. Thornton,—a tall, handsome man who carried himself as grandly as if the blood of a hundred kings was flowing in his veins. He did not see the children on the doorsteps, until Gerard, in response

to a nod from Mildred, lifted his cap, while Alice leaned eagerly forward and said, "Look, mamma, there's Milly and Bessie and the baby. Hello, Milly. I've comed back;" then he said quickly, "Allie, be quiet; and you Gerard, why do you lift your cap to such people? It's not necessary;" and in these few words was embodied the character of the man.

Courteous to his equals, but proud and haughty to his inferiors, with an implicit belief in the Thorntons and no belief at all in such people as the Leaches, or indeed in many of the citizens of Rocky Point, where he owned, or held mortgages on, half the smaller premises. The world was made for him, and he was Giles Thornton, of English extraction on his father's side and Southern blood on his mother's, and in his pride and pomposity he went on past the old red farm-house, while Mildred sat for a moment looking after the carriage and envying its occupants.

"Oh, if I were rich, like Mrs. Thornton, and could wear silks and jewels; and I will, some day," she said, with a far-off look in her eyes, as if she were seeing the future and what it held for her. "Yes, I will be rich, no matter what it costs," she continued, "and people shall envy me, and I'll make father and mother so happy? and you, Charlie" ——

Here she stopped, and parting the curls from her baby brother's brow, looked earnestly into his blue eyes; then went on, "you shall have a golden crown, and you, Bessie darling, shall have,—shall have,—Gerard Thornton himself, if you want him."

"And I lame Alice?" asked a cheery voice, as there bounded into the kitchen a ten year old lad, who, with

his naked feet, sunny face and torn straw hat, might have stood for Whittier's barefoot boy.

"Oh, Tom," Mildred cried, "I'm glad you've come. Won't you pick up the pods while I get the peas into the pot? It's almost noon, and I've got the table to set."

Before Tom could reply, another voice called out, "You have given Gerard to Bessie and Alice to Tom; now what am I to have, Miss Prophetess?"

The speaker was a fair-haired youth of seventeen, with a slight Scotch accent and a frank, open, genial face, such as strangers always trust. He had stopped a moment at the corner of the house to pick a rose for Mildred, and hearing her prophecies, sauntered leisurely to the doorstep, where he sat down, and fanning himself with his big hat, asked what she had for him.

"Nothing, Hugh McGregor," Mildred replied, with a little flush on her cheek. "Nothing but that;" and she tossed him a peapod she had picked from the floor.

"Thanks," Hugh said, catching the pod in his hand. "There are two peas in it yet, a big and a little one. I am the big, you are the little, and I'm going to keep them and see which hardens first, you or I."

"What a fool you are," Mildred said, with increased color on her cheek, while Hugh pocketed the pod and went on: "A crown for Charlie, Gerard for Bessie, Allie for Tom, a peapod for me, and what for you, my darling?"

"I am not your darling," Mildred answered quickly; "and I'm going to be,—mistress of Thornton Park," she added, after a little hesitancy, while Hugh rejoined: "As you have given Gerard to Bessie, I don't see how you'll bring it about, unless Mrs. Thornton dies, a

thing not unlikely, and you marry that big-feeling man, whom you say you hate because he turned you from his premises. Have you forgotten that?"

Mildred had not forgotten it, and her face was scarlet as she recalled the time the past summer when, wishing to buy a dress for Charlie, then six months old, she had gone into one of Mr. Thornton's pastures after huckleberries, which grew there so abundantly, and which found a ready market at the groceries in town. In Rocky Point, berries were considered public property, and she had no thought that she was trespassing until a voice close to her said, "What are you doing here? Begone, before I have you arrested."

In great alarm Mildred had seized her ten quart pail, which was nearly full, and hurried away, never venturing again upon the forbidden ground.

"Yes, I remember it," she said, "but that wouldn't keep me from being mistress of the Park, if I had a chance and he wasn't there. Wouldn't I make a good one?"

"Ye-es," Hugh answered slowly, as he looked her over from her head to her feet. "But you'll have to grow taller and fill out some, and do something with that snarly pate of yours, which looks this morning like an oven broom," and with this thrust at her bushy hair Hugh disappeared from the door just in time to escape the dipper of water which went splashing after him.

"Oven broom, indeed!" Mildred said indignantly, with a pull at the broom; "I wonder if I am to blame for my hair. I hate it!"

This was Mildred's favorite expression, and there were but few things to which she had not applied it. But most of all she hated her humble home and the

boiled dinner she put upon the table just as the clock struck twelve, wondering as she did so if they knew what such a dish was at Thornton Park, and what they were having there that day.

CHAPTER II.

AT THORNTON PARK.

MEANWHILE the barouche had stopped under the grand archway at the side entrance of the Park house, where a host of servants was in waiting; the butler, the housekeeper, the cook, the laundress, the maids, the gardener and groom and several more, for, aping his English ancestry and the custom of his mother's Southern home before the war, Mr. Thornton kept about him a retinue of servants with whom he was very popular. He paid them well and fed them well, and while requiring from them the utmost deference, was kind in every way, and they came crowding around him with words of welcome and offers of assistance. Mrs. Thornton went at once to her room, while Alice was taken possession of by her nurse, who had come from the city the night before, and who soon had her charge in a little willow carriage, drawing her around the grounds. Gerard, who was a quiet, studious boy, went to the library, while Mr. Thornton, after seeing that his wife was comfortable, joined his little daughter, whose love for her country home he knew, and to whom he said, "I suppose you are quite happy now?"

"Yes, papa," she replied, "only I want somebody to play with me. Ann is too big. I want Milly Leach. She was so nice to me last summer. Can't I have her, papa?"

For Alice to want a thing was for her to have it, if possession were possible, and her father answered her:

"Yes, daughter, you shall have her," without knowing at all who Milly Leach was. But Alice explained that she was the girl who lived in the little red house where Ann had often taken her the summer before to play with Tom and Bessie. And so it came about that Ann was sent that afternoon to the farm house with a request from Mr. Thornton that Mildred should come for the summer and amuse his daughter. Three dollars a week was the remuneration offered, for he always held out a golden bait when the fish was doubtful, as he thought it might be in this case. Mrs. Leach was better, and sitting up while Mildred combed and brushed the hair much like her own, except that it was softer and smoother, because it had more care and there was less of it.

"Oh, mother," she cried, when Ann made her errand known, "can't I go? Three dollars a week! Only think, what a lot; and I'll give it all to you, and you can get that pretty French calico at Mr. Overton's store. May I go?"

"Who will do the work when I'm sick?" Mrs. Leach asked, herself a good deal moved by the three dollars a week, which seemed a fortune to her.

"I guess they'll let me come home when you have a headache," Milly pleaded, and on this condition it was finally arranged that she should go to the Park for a time at least, and two days after we saw her shelling

peas and longing for a change, the change came and she started out on her career in her best gingham dress and white apron, with her small satchel of clothes in her hand and a great lump in her throat as she kissed her mother and Bessie and Charlie, and would have kissed Tom if he had not disappeared with a don't-care air and a watery look in his eyes, which he wiped with his checked shirt sleeve, and then, boy-like, threw a green apple after his sister, hiding behind the tree when she looked around to see whence it came.

It was a lovely morning, and Thornton Park lay fair and beautiful in the distance as she walked rapidly on until a familiar whistle stopped her and she saw Hugh hurrying across the fields and waving his hat to her.

"Hello!" he said, as he came to her side, "I nearly broke my neck to catch you. And so you are going to be a hired girl. Let me carry that satchel," and he took it from her while she answered hotly, "I ain't a hired girl. I'm Allie's little friend; that's what she said when she came with Ann last night and we made the bargain, and I'm to have three dollars a week."

"Three dollars a week! That is big," Hugh said, staggered a little at the price. "But, I say, don't go so fast. Let's sit down awhile and talk;" and seating himself upon a log, with Mildred beside him and the satchel at his feet, he went on: "Milly, I don't want you to go to Thornton Park. Won't you give it up? Seems as if I was losing you."

"You never had me to lose," was the girl's reply, and Hugh continued:

"That's so; but I mean that I like you better than any

girl I ever knew ; like you just as I should my sister if I had one."

Here Milly elevated her eyebrows a little, while Hugh went on : "And I don't want you to go to that fine place and learn to despise us all, and the old home by the brook."

"I shall never do that, for I love father and mother and Tom and Bessie and Charlie better than I do myself. I'd die for them, but I do hate the old house and the poverty and work, and I mean to be a grand lady and rich, and then I'll help them all, and you, too, if you'll let me."

"I don't need your help, and I don't want to see you a grand lady, and I don't want you to be snubbed by that proud Thornton," Hugh replied, and Milly answered quickly, with short, emphatic nods of her head :

"I sha'n't be snubbed by him, for if he sasses me I shall sass him. I've made up my mind to that."

"And when you do may I be there to hear ; but you are a brick, any way," was Hugh's laughing rejoinder, and as Milly had risen to her feet, he, too, arose, and taking up the satchel walked with her to the Park gate, where he said good-bye, but called to her after a minute, "I say, Milly, I have that pea-pod yet, and *you* are beginning to wilt, but I am as plump as ever."

"Pshaw !" was Mildred's scornful reply, as she hurried on through the Park, while Hugh walked slowly down the road, wishing he had money and could give it all to Milly.

"But I shall never be rich," he said to himself, "even if I'm a lawyer as I mean to be, for only dishonest law-

yers make money, they say, and I sha'n't be a cheat if I never make a cent."

Meanwhile Milly had reached the house, which had always impressed her with a good deal of awe, it was so stately and grand. Going up to the front door she was about to ring, when the same voice which had ordered her from the berry pasture, said to her rather sharply :

" What are you doing here, little girl ?"

" I'm Mildred Leach, and I've come to be Allie's little friend," Mildred answered, facing the speaker squarely, with her satchel in both hands.

" Oh, yes ; I know, but go to the side door, and say Miss Alice instead of Allie," Mr. Thornton replied as he began to puff at his cigar.

Here was *sass* at the outset, and remembering her promise to Hugh, Milly gave a vigorous pull at the bell, saying as she did so :

" I sha'n't call her Miss, and I shall go into the front door, or I sha'n't stay. I ain't dirt !"

This speech was so astounding and unexpected, that instead of resenting it, Mr. Thornton laughed aloud, and as a servant just then came to the door, he sauntered away, saying to himself :

" Plucky, by Jove ; but if she suits Allie, I don't care."

If Mr. Thornton had a redeeming trait it was his love for his wife and children, especially little Alice, for whom he would sacrifice everything, even his pride, which is saying a great deal, and when, an hour later, he found her in the Park with Mildred at her side making dandelion curls for her, he was very gracious and friendly, asking her how old she was, and giving her numerous charges with regard to his daughter. Then

he went away, while Mildred looked admiringly after him, thinking how handsome he was in his city clothes, and how different he was from her father.

"It's because he's rich and has money. I mean to have some, too," she thought, and with the seeds of ambition taking deeper and deeper root, she began her life at Thornton Park, where she soon became a great favorite, not only with Alice, but with Mrs. Thornton, to whom she was almost as necessary as to Alice herself.

Regularly every Saturday night her three dollars were paid to her, and as regularly every Sunday morning she took them home, where they were very acceptable, for Mr. Leach had not the least idea of thrift, and his daughter's wages tided over many an ugly gap in the household economy. Mrs. Leach had the French calico gown, and Charlie a pair of red shoes, and Bessie a new white frock, and Tom a new straw hat, but for all that they missed Mildred everywhere, she was so helpful and willing, even when rebelling most against her condition, and when in September Mrs. Thornton proposed that she should go with them to New York, Mrs. Leach refused so decidedly that the wages were at once doubled, and six dollars a week offered in place of three. Money was nothing to Mrs. Thornton, and as what she set her mind upon she usually managed to get, she succeeded in this, and when in October the family returned to the city, Mildred went with them, very smart in the new suit Mrs. Thornton had given her, and very red about the eyes from the tears she had shed when saying good-bye to her home.

"If I'd known I should feel this way, I believe I wouldn't have gone," she had thought, as she went

from room to room with Charlie in her arms, Bessie holding her hand, and Tom following in the rear, whistling "The girl I left behind me," and trying to seem very brave.

On a bench by the brook which ran back of the house Mildred at last sat down with Charlie in her lap, and looking at the water running so fast at her feet, wondered if she should ever see it again, and where Hugh was that he did not come to say good-bye. She had a little package for him, and when at last he appeared, and leaping across the brook, sat down beside her, she gave it to him, and said with a forced laugh :

"A splint from the oven broom. You used to ask for one, and here 'tis."

He knew what she meant, and opening the paper saw one of her dark curls.

"Thanks, Milly," he said, with a lump in his throat. "I'll keep it, and the peas, too, till you come back. When will that be ?"

"I don't know ; next summer, most likely ; though perhaps I shall stay away until I'm such a fine lady that you won't know me. I'm to study with Allie's governess and learn everything, so as to teach some time," she said.

"Here's the carriage," Tom called round the corner, and kissing Charlie and Bessie and Tom, who did not resist her now, and crying on her mother's neck, and wringing her father's hard hand and saying good-bye to Hugh, she went out from the home where for many a long year she was not seen again.

CHAPTER III.

INCIDENTS OF FIFTEEN YEARS.

At first the inmates of the farmhouse missed the young girl sadly ; but they gradually learned to get on very well without her, and when in the spring word came that Mrs. Thornton was going to Europe and wished to take Mildred with her, offering as an inducement a sum far beyond what they knew the girl's services were worth, and when Mildred, too, joined her entreaties with Mrs. Thornton's, telling of the advantage the foreign life would be to her, as she was to share in Alice's instruction, the father and mother consented, with no thought, however, that she would not return within the year. When Hugh heard of it he went alone into the woods, and sitting down near the chestnut tree, where he and Milly had often gathered the brown nuts together, thought the matter out in his plain, practical way.

"That ends it with Milly," he said. "Europe will turn her head, and if she ever comes home she will despise us more than ever and me most of all, with my gawky manners and big hands and feet."

Then, taking from his pocket a little box, he opened it carefully, and removing a fold of paper looked wistfully at the contents. A curl of dark-brown hair and a gray pod with two peas inside,—one shriveled and harder than the other, and as it seemed to him harder and more shriveled than when he last looked at it.

"It's just as I thought it would be," he said. "She

will grow away from me with her French and German and foreign ways, unless I grow with her," and for the first time in his life Hugh felt the stirring of a genuine and laudable ambition. "*I* will make something of myself," he said. "I have it in me, I know."

The curl and the peas were put away, and from that time forward Hugh's career was onward and upward, first to school in Pittsfield, then to college at Amherst, then to a law office in Albany, and then ten years later back to Rocky Point, where he devoted himself to his profession and won golden laurels as the most honorable and prominent lawyer in all the mountain district. Rocky Point had had a boom in the meantime, and now spread itself over the hillside and across the pasture land, almost to the red farm house which stood by the running brook, its exterior a little changed, as blinds had been added and an extra room with a bow window, which looked toward the village and the brook. And here on summer mornings fifteen years after Mildred went away a pale-faced woman sat, with her hair now white as snow, combed smoothly back from her brow, her hands folded on her lap, and her eyes turned towards the window through which she knew the sun was shining brightly, although she could not see it, for Mrs. Leach was blind. Headache and hereditary disease had done their work, and when her husband died she could not see his face, on which her tears fell so fast. For more than two years he had been lying in the cemetery up the mountain road, and beside his grave was another and a shorter one, nearly level with the ground, for it was twelve years since Charlie died and won the golden crown which Milly had promised him that day when the spirit of prophecy was upon her.

During all these years Mildred had never come back to the old home which bore so many proofs of her loving remembrance, for every dollar she could spare from her liberal allowance was sent to her people. Mrs. Thornton had died in Paris, where Alice was so far cured of her spinal trouble that only a slight limp told that she had ever been lame. At the time of Mrs. Thornton's death there was staying in the same hotel an English lady, a widow, who had recently lost her only daughter, a girl about Mildred's age, with something of Mildred's look in her eyes. To this lady, whose name was Mrs. Gardner, Mildred had in her helpful way rendered many little services and made herself so agreeable that when Mrs. Thornton died the lady offered to take her as her companion and possibly adopted daughter, if the girl proved all she hoped she might. When this proposal was made to Mr. Thornton he neither assented nor objected. The girl could do as she pleased, he said, and as she pleased to go she went, sorry to leave Alice, but glad to escape from the father, whose utter indifference and apparent forgetfulness of her presence in his family, had chafed and offended her. Rude he had never been to her, but she might have been a mere machine, so far as he had any interest in or care for her. She was simply a servant, whose name he scarcely remembered, and of whose family he knew very little when Mrs. Gardner questioned him of them.

"Very poor and very common; such as would be called peasantry on the continent," he said, and Mildred, who accidentally overheard the remark, felt the hot blood stain her face and throb through her veins as she registered a vow that this proud, cold man, who

likened her to a peasant, should some day hold a different opinion of her.

She was nearly fifteen now, and older than her years with her besetting sin, ambition, intensified by her life abroad, and as she saw, in the position which Mrs. Gardner offered her an added round to the ladder she was climbing, she took it unhesitatingly, and went with her to Switzerland, from which place she wrote to her mother, asking pardon if she had done wrong, and enclosing fifty pounds which she had been saving for her.

"Taken the bits in her teeth," was Hugh's comment, when he heard of it, while Mr. and Mrs. Leach mourned over their wayward daughter, whose loving letters, however, and substantial gifts made some amends for her protracted absence.

She had gone with Mrs. Gardner as a companion, but grew so rapidly into favor that the lady began at last to call her daughter, and when she found that her middle name was Frances, to address her as Fanny, the name of the little girl she had lost, and to register her as Miss Gardner. To this Mildred at first objected as something not quite honorable, but when she saw how much more attention Fanny Gardner received than Mildred Leach had done, she gave up the point, and became so accustomed to her new name that the sound of the old would have seemed strange to her had she heard it spoken. Of the change, however, she never told her mother, and seldom said much of Mrs. Gardner, except that she was kind and rich and handsome, with many suitors for her hand, and when at last she wrote that the lady had married a Mr. Harwood, and spoke of her ever after as Mrs. Harwood, the name Gardner passed in time entirely from the minds of both Mr. and

Mrs. Leach, who, being very human, began to feel a pride in the fact that they had a daughter abroad, who was growing into a fine lady and could speak both German and French.

From point to point Mildred traveled with the Harwoods, passing always as Mrs. Harwood's adopted daughter, which she was to all intents and purposes. And in a way she was very happy, although at times there came over her such a longing for home that she was half resolved to give up all her grandeur and go back to the life she had so detested. They were at a villa on the Rhine, not very far from Constance, when she heard of Charlie's death, and burying her face in the soft grass of the terrace she sobbed as if her heart were broken.

"Oh, Charlie," she moaned, "dead, and I not there to see you. I never dreamed that you would die; and I meant to do so much for you when you were older. I wish I had never left you, Charlie, my darling."

Could Mildred have had her way she would have gone home then, but Mrs. Harwood would not permit it, and so the years went on until in Egypt she heard of her father's death, and that her mother was blind. It was Tom who wrote her the news, which he did not break very gently, for in a way he resented his sister's long absence, and let her know that he did.

"Not that we really need you," he wrote, "for Bessie sees to the house, which is fixed up a good deal, thanks to you and mother's Uncle Silas. Did you ever hear of him? I scarcely had until he died last year and left us five thousand dollars, which makes us quite rich, We have some blinds and a new room with a bay window and a girl to do the work; so, you see, we are very fine,

but mother is always fretting for you, and more since she was blind, lamenting that she can never see your face again. Should we know you, I wonder? I guess not, it is so long since you went away, thirteen years. Why, you are twenty-six! Almost an old maid, and I suppose an awful swell, with your French and German and Italian. Bessie can speak French a little. She is eighteen, and the handsomest girl you ever saw, unless it is Alice Thornton, whose back is straight as a string. She comes to Thornton Park every summer with Gerard, and when she isn't here with Bessie, Bessie is there with her. Mr. Thornton is in town sometimes, high and mighty as ever, with a face as black as thunder when he sees Gerard talking French to Bessie, for it was of him she learned it. I have been away to the Academy several quarters, and would like to go to college, but shall have to give that up, now father is dead. Did I tell you I was reading law with Hugh? He is a big man every way, stands six feet in his slippers, and head and shoulders above every lawyer in these parts. Why, they sometimes send for him to go to Albany to try a suit. I used to think he was sweet on you, but he has not mentioned you for a long time, except when mother got blind, and then he said, 'Milly ought to be here.' But don't fret; we get along well enough, and you wouldn't be happy with us. "Yours,

"Tom."

When Mildred read this letter she made up her mind to go home at any cost, and would have done so, if on her return from Naples she had not been stricken down with a malarial fever, which kept her an invalid for months, and when she recovered from it there had come

into her life a new excitement which absorbed every other thought, and led finally to a result without which this story would never have been written.

CHAPTER IV.

AT THE FARM HOUSE.

It was fifteen years since Milly Leach sat shelling peas on the doorstep where now two young girls were sitting, one listening to and the other reading a letter which evidently excited and agitated her greatly. It was as follows :

"Langham's, London, May —, 18 —.

"Dear Alice,—"You will probably be surprised to hear that I am going to be married to a Miss Fanny Gardner, whom I first met in Florence. She is twenty-seven or twenty-eight, and the most beautiful woman I ever saw, and good as she is beautiful. You are sure to like her. The ceremony takes place at —— church in London, and after the wedding breakfast at her mother's town house we shall go for a short time to Wales and Ireland and then sail for home.

"I suppose you and Gerard are at the Park, or will be soon, and I want you to see that everything is in order. We shall occupy the suite of rooms on the south side of the house instead of the east, and I'd like to have them refurnished throughout, and will leave everything to your good taste, only suggesting that although Miss Gardner's hair is rather a peculiar color,—golden brown, some might call it,—she is not a blonde ; neither is she

a brunette; and such tints as soft French grays and pinks will suit her better than blue. The wedding day is fixed for June —. Shall telegraph as soon as we reach New York, and possibly write you before.

"Your loving father,

"GILES THORNTON."

"Oh—h," and the girl who was listening drew a long breath. "Oh—h! Going to be married,—to Fanny Gardner. That's a pretty name. She's English, I suppose. I guess you'll like her;" and Bessie put her hand, half pityingly, half caressingly upon the arm of her friend, down whose cheeks two great tears were rolling.

"Yes," Alice replied; "but it is so sudden, and I'm thinking of mother. I wonder what Gerard will say. There he is now. Oh, Gerard," she called, as a young man came through the gate and seating himself upon a lower step took Bessie's hand in his and held it while the bright blush on her lovely face told what he was to her.

"What's the matter, Allie?" he said to his sister. "You look solemn as a graveyard."

"Papa is going to be married," Alice replied, with a sob.

"Wha—at!" and Gerard started to his feet. "Father married! Why, he is nearly fifty years old. Let me see,"—and taking the letter from Alice he read it aloud, commenting as he read. "Twenty-seven or twenty-eight; not much older than I am, for I am twenty-five; quite too young for me to call her mother. 'The most beautiful woman I ever saw.' He must he hard hit. 'Ceremony takes place ——' Why, girls, it's to-day! It's past. I congratulate you, Allie, on a stepmother,

and here's to her health from her son ;" and stooping over Bessie he kissed her before she could remonstrate.

Just then Hugh McGregor came up the walk, and taking off his straw hat wiped the perspiration from his face, while he stood for a moment surveying the group before him with a quizzical smile upon his lips. Ffteen years had changed Hugh from the tall, awkward boy of seventeen into the taller, less awkward man of thirty-two, who, having mingled a good deal with the world, had acquired much of the ease and polish which such mingling brings. Handsome he could not be called ; there was too much of the rugged Scotch in him for that, but he had something better than beauty in his frank, honest face and kindly blue eyes, which bespoke the man who could be trusted to the death and never betray the trust. He, too, had received a letter from Mr. Thornton, whose business in Rocky Point he had in charge, and after reading it had gone to Thornton Park with the news. Finding both Alice and Gerard absent, he had followed on to the farm house where he was sure they were.

" I see you know it," he said, pointing to the letter in Gerard's hand. I have heard from your father and came to tell you. Did you suspect this at all ?"

" No," Alice replied ; " he has never written a word of any Miss Gardner. I wonder who she is."

" I don't know," Hugh answered slowly, while there swept over him the same sensation he had experienced when he first saw the name in Mr. Thornton's letter.

It did not seem quite new, and he repeated it over and over again but did not associate it with Mildred although she was often in his mind, more as a pleasant memory now, perhaps, for the feelings of the man were

not quite what the boy's had been, and in one sense Milly had dropped out of his life. When she first went away, and he was in school, everything was done with a direct reference to making of himself something of which Milly would be proud when she came back. But Milly had not come back, and the years had crept on and he was a man honored among men, and in his busy life had but little leisure for thought beyond his business. It was seldom now that he looked at the dark brown curl, or the little pea in the pod, hard as a bullet, and shriveled almost to nothing. But when he did he always thought of the summer day years ago and the young girl on the steps and the sound of the brook gurgling over the stones as it ran under the little bridge. And it all came back to him now, with news of Mr. Thornton's bride, though why it should he could not tell. He only knew that Milly was haunting him that morning with strange persistency, and his first question to Bessie was," When did you hear from your sister ?"

" Last night. She is in London, or was,—but wrote she was going on a journey and then was coming home. I shall believe that when I see her. Mother has the letter, and will be glad to see you," was Bessie's reply, and Hugh went into the pleasant, sunny room where the blind woman was sitting, with her hands folded on her lap and a listening expression on her face.

" Oh, Hugh," she exclaimed, " I am glad you have come. I want to talk to you."

Straightening her widow's cap, which was a little awry, as deftly as a woman could have done, he sat down beside her, while she continued, as she drew a letter from her bosom, where she always kept Milly's last.

"I heard from Milly last night. I am afraid she is not happy, but she is coming home by and by. She says so. Read it, please."

Taking the letter he began to read:

"LONDON, May —, 18—.

"DARLING MOTHER:—"I am in London, but shall not stay long, for I am going on a journey, and it may be weeks, if not months, before I can write you again. But don't worry. If anything happens to me you will know it. I am quite well and—oh, mother, I never loved you as I do now or needed your prayers so much. Pray for me. I can't pray for myself, but I'd give half my life to put my arms around your neck and look into your dear, blind eyes, which, if they could see, would not know me, I am so changed. My hair fell out when I was so sick in Naples, and is not the same color it used to be. Everything is different. Oh, if I could see you, and I shall in the fall, if I live.

"Give my love to Tom and Bessie, and tell Hugh, —— No, don't tell him anything. God bless you, darling mother. Good-bye,

"From

"MILDRED F. LEACH."

Hugh's face was a study as he read this letter, which sounded like a cry for help from an aching heart. Was Milly unhappy, and if so, why? he asked himself as he still held the letter with his eyes fixed upon the words "Tell Hugh —— No, don't tell him anything." Did they mean that in her trouble she had for a moment turned to him, he wondered, but quickly put that thought aside. She had been too long silent to think of him now; and he was content that it should be so. His liking for her had been but a boy's fancy for a little girl,

he reasoned, and yet, as he held the letter in his hand, it seemed to bring Milly very near to him, and he saw her plainly as she looked when entering Thornton Park that morning so long ago. "I felt I was losing her then. I am sure of it now," he was thinking, when Mrs. Leach asked what he thought of Milly's letter, and where he supposed she was going, and what ailed her.

Hugh was Mrs. Leach's confidant and oracle, whom she consulted on all occasions, and Tom himself was no kinder or tenderer in his manner to her than this big-hearted Scotchman, who soothed and comforted her now just as he always did, and then, without returning to the young people by the door he went out through the long window of Mrs. Leach's room and off across the fields to the woods on the mountain side, where he sat down upon a rocky ledge to rest, wondering why the day was so oppressive, and why the words "Tell Hugh" should affect him so strangely, and why Mildred seemed so near to him that once he put up his hand with a feeling that he should touch her little hard, brown hand, browned and hardened with the work she hated so much. It was not often that he indulged in sentiment of this kind, but the spell was on him, and he sat bound by it until the whistle from the large shop had called the workmen from their dinners. Then he arose and went down the mountain road to his office, saying to himself: "I wonder where she is to-day, when I am so impressed with a sense of her nearness that I believe she is thinking of me," and with this comforting assurance, Hugh was very patient and kind to the old woman whose will he had changed a dozen times, and who came to have it changed again, without a thought of offering him any remuneration for his trouble.

Meantime the group by the door had been joined by Tom, who had grown into just the kind of man Whittier's barefoot boy would have grown into if he had grown at all,—a frank, sunny-faced young man, whom every old woman and young girl liked, and whom one young girl loved with all the intensity of her nature, caring nothing that he was poor and one whom her proud father would scorn as a son-in-law. They were not exactly engaged,—for Alice said her father must be consulted first, and they were waiting for him, while Gerard, who could wait for nothing where Bessie was concerned, was drinking his fill of love in her blue eyes, with no thought or care as to whether his father would oppose him or not.

"Hello, you are all here," Tom said, as he came round the corner and laid his hand on Allie's shoulder; then, glancing at her face, he continued: "Why, you've been crying. What's the matter, Allie?"

"Oh, Tom, papa is married to-day,—to Fanny Gardner, an English girl with golden-brown hair and only twenty-eight years old and very handsome, he says. I know I shall hate her," Alice sobbed, while Tom burst into a merry laugh.

"Your father married to a girl with golden-brown hair, which should be gray to match his,—that is a shame, by Jove. But, I say, Allie, I'm glad of it, for with a young wife at Thornton Park, you will be *de trop*, don't you see?" And just as Gerard had done to Bessie so Tom did to Alice—kissed her pale face, with his best wishes to the bride, who was discussed pretty freely, from her name to the furniture of her room, which was to harmonize with the complexion of one

who was neither a blond nor a brunette, but very beautiful.

For the next few weeks there was a great deal of bustle and excitement at Thornton Park, where Bessie went every day to talk over and assist in the arrangement of the bridal rooms, which were just completed when there came a telegram from New York saying that the newly married pair had arrived and would be home the following day.

CHAPTER V.

THE BRIDE.

A CUNARD steamer had landed its living freight at the wharf, where there was the usual scramble and confusion, as trunks and boxes were opened and angry, excited women confronted with their spoils by relentless custom house officers, bent upon doing their duty, unless stopped by the means so frequently employed upon such occasions. Outside the long building stood an open carriage in which a lady sat, very simply but elegantly attired, with money, and Paris, and Worth showing in every article of her dress, from her round hat to her dainty boots, which could not be called small, for the feet they covered harmonized with the lady herself, who was tall and well proportioned, with a splendidly developed figure, on which anything looked well. There was a brilliant color in her cheeks, and her brown eyes were large and bright and beautiful, but very sad as

they looked upon the scenes around her without seeming to see anything. Nor did their expression change when she was joined by an elderly man, who, taking his seat beside her, said first to the driver :

"To the Windsor," and then to her, "I was longer than I thought I should be ; those rascally officers gave me a world of trouble, but we shall soon be at the hotel now. Are you very tired ?"

The question was asked very tenderly, for Giles Thornton was greatly in love with his bride of a few weeks. He had first met her in Florence, where she was recovering from the long illness which had lasted for months and made her weak as a child and almost as helpless. During her sickness her hair had fallen out, and owing to some unusual freak of nature it had come in much lighter than it was before and not so curly, although it still lay in wavy masses upon her head, and here and there coiled itself into rings around her forehead. The Harwoods were staying at the same hotel with Mr. Thornton, and it was in the Boboli Gardens that he first met her as she was being wheeled in an invalid chair by her attendant.

"Will he know me ?" was her first thought when he was presented to her.

But there was no fear of that, for Mildred Leach had passed as wholly out of his mind as if he had never seen her, and if she had not there was no danger of his recognizing the girl who had been his daughter's companion in this lovely woman whose voice and manner and appearance were indicative of the refinement and cultivation to which for years she had been accustomed. To him she was Miss Gardner, an English girl, and during the half hour he walked by her chair in the gar-

dens, he felt his heart throb as it had never throbbed since he buried his wife. He had loved her devotedly and had never thought to fill her place until now when love did its work at first sight, and when two weeks later the Harwoods left Florence for Venice and Switzerland, he was with them, to all intents and purposes Mildred's lover, although he had not openly announced himself as such.

To Mrs. Harwood Mildred had said, "Don't tell him who I am. I prefer to do that when the time comes. I am going to punish him for calling my father a peasant when you inquired about him. I heard him. I have not forgotton."

And so Mr. Thornton went blindly to his fate, which came one day in Ouchy in the grounds of the Beau Rivage, where Mildred was sitting alone, with her eyes fixed upon the lake and the mountains beyond, and her thoughts back in the old farm house, with her mother and Bessie and Tom and Hugh, of whom she had not heard a word for months.

"He has forgotten me," she said to herself, "and why shouldn't he? I was never much to him, and yet" ——

She did not get any farther, for there was a footstep near; some one was coming, and in a moment Mr. Thornton said to her, "Alone, Miss Gardner, and dreaming? May I dispel the dream and sit beside you a moment?"

Mildred knew then what was before her, as well as she did half an hour later, during which time Giles Thornton had laid himself and his fortune at her feet, and what was harder than all to meet, had made her believe that he loved her. She knew that he admired her,

but she had not counted upon his love, which moved her a little, for Mr. Thornton was not a man to whom one could listen quietly when he was in earnest and resolved to carry his point, and for an instant Mildred wavered. It was something to be Mrs. Giles Thornton, of Thornton Park, and ought to satisfy her ambition. With all her beauty and social advantages, she as yet had received no eligible offer. It was known that she had no money, and only an Italian count and the youngest son of an English earl had asked her hand in marriage. But both were poor, and one almost an imbecile, from whom she shrank in disgust. Mr. Thornton was different ; he was a gentleman of wealth and position, and as his wife she would for a part of the year live near her family. But with the thought of them there came the memory of an overgrown, awkward boy, whose feet and hands were so big that he never knew what to do with them, but whose heart was so much bigger than his feet and hands, that it bore down the scale and Mr. Thornton's chance was lost for the time being.

"Hugh may never be anything to me," she thought, "but I must see him before I give myself to any one."

Then turning to Mr. Thornton, she said, "I thank you for your offer, which I believe is sincere, and that makes it harder for me to tell you what I must. Do you remember a girl, Mildred Leach, who was your daughter's little friend, as she called herself, for she was as proud as you, and would not be a maid?"

"Ye-es," Mr. Thornton stammered, as he looked wistfully into the beautiful face confronting him so steadily. "I had forgotton her entirely, but I remember now. She left us to go with an English lady, a

Mrs. Gardner. Why, that is Mrs. Harwood,—and,—and,—oh, you are not she !"

"Yes, I am," was Mildred's reply, and then very rapidly she told her story, not omitting her having overheard him liken her parents to peasants when speaking of them to Mrs. Gardner. "I determined then, she said, "that if possible I would one day humble your pride, but if I have done so, it has not given me the satisfaction I thought it would, and I am sorry to cause you pain, for I believe you were in earnest when you asked me to be your wife, which I can never be."

"No," he answered slowly, like one who had received a blow from which he could not at once recover. "No, you can never be my wife ; Mildred Leach ; it does not seem possible."

Then he arose and walked rapidly away, and when the evening boat left Ouchy for Geneva he was on it, going he cared but little where, if by going he could forget the past as connected with Mildred Leach.

"I cannot marry her family," he said many times during the next few months, when he was wandering everywhere and vainly trying to forget her, for always before him was the face he had never admired so much as when he last saw it, flushed and pale by turns, with a wondrous light in the brown eyes where tears were gathering. "If it were not for her family, or if I could separate her from them, I would *not* give her up," he had often thought when in the following May he met her again at the Grand Hotel in Paris, where the Harwoods were stopping.

He could not tell what it was which impressed him with the idea that she had changed her mind, as she came forward to meet him, saying she was glad to see

him, and adding that Mr. and Mrs. Harwood had gone to the opera. She seemed very quiet and absent minded at first, and then rousing herself, said to him abruptly, "You did not stop long enough in Ouchy for me to inquire after my family. You must have seen them often since I left home."

"Yes,—no," he answered in some embarrassment; "I have of course been to Thornton Park, but I do not remember much about them. I believe your father rents, or did rent, some land of me, but am not sure, as my agent attends to all that."

"My father is dead," Mildred answered so sharply as to make him jump and color painfully, as if guilty of a misdemeanor in not knowing that her father was dead.

"I beg your pardon. I am very sorry. I,—yes,—am very sorry," he began; but she cut him short by saying, "Do you know Hugh McGregor?"

"Oh, yes. I know him well," and Mr. Thornton brightened perceptibly. "He is my lawyer, and attends to all my business in Rocky Point; a fine fellow,—a very fine fellow. Do you know him?"

"Yes," Mildred replied, while her breath came heavily, "I know him, and I hear he is to marry my sister Bessie."

"Oh, indeed," and as if memory had suddenly come back to him, Mr. Thornton seemed immensely relieved. "I remember now,—Bessie Leach; that's the girl I have sometimes seen with Alice. Gerard taught her French,—a very pretty girl. And Mr. McGregor is engaged to her? I am very glad. Any girl might be proud to marry him."

Mildred made no reply to this, and Mr. Thornton never guessed the dreary emptiness of her soul as she

sat with her hands clasped tightly together, thinking of the man whom any girl would be proud to marry. A few months before she would have said that he was nothing more to her than the friend of her childhood, but she had recently learned her mistake, and that the thought of seeing him again was one of the pleasantest anticipations of her home going. There had come to the hotel a Mr. and Mrs. Hayford from America, who sometimes spent their summers at Rocky Point, where Mrs. Hayford was once a teacher. As Mildred had been her pupil, she remembered her at once, after hearing the name, and would have introduced herself but for a conversation accidentally overheard between Mrs. Hayford and a friend who had also been at Rocky Point, and to whom she was retailing the news, first of New York and then of Rocky Point, where she had spent a few days in April prior to sailing.

"Do you remember that Hercules of a lawyer, Hugh McGregor, whom you admired so much?" was asked. "They say he is engaged to Bessie Leach, a girl much younger than himself, but very pretty,—beautiful, in fact, and ——

Mildred heard no more, but hurried away, with an ache in her heart that she could not quite define. Tom had intimated that Gerard was interested in Bessie, and now Hugh was engaged to her. Well, it was all right, she said, and would not admit to herself how hard the blow had struck her and how she smarted under it. And it was just when the smart was at its keenest that Mr. Thornton came again across her path, more in love, if possible, than ever, and more intent upon making her his wife. He had fought a desperate battle with his

pride and had conquered it, and within twenty-four hours after meeting her in Paris, she had promised to marry him, and when her pledge was given she was conscious of a feeling of quiet and content which she had scarcely hoped for. In his character as lover Mr. Thornton did not seem at all like the man she had feared in her childhood, nor if he felt it did he gave the slightest sign that he was stooping from his high position. She had been very frank with him and had made no pretension of love. "I will be true to you," she said, "and try to please you in everything. I am tired of the aimless life I have led so many years, and I think Mrs. Harwood is a little tired of me too. She says I ought to have married long ago, but I could not marry a fool even if he had a title. I shall be so glad to go home to my friends, although I am so changed they will never know me."

Then she added laughingly: "Wouldn't it be great fun not to write them who I am and see if they will recognize me?"

She did not really mean what she said, or guess that it harmonized perfectly with a plan which Mr. Thornton had in mind, and was resolved to carry out, if possible. If he could have had his wish he would not have gone to Rocky Point at all, but his children were there and Mildred's heart was set upon it, and he must meet the difficulty in some way. He could marry Mildred, but not her family, and he shrank from the intimacy which must necessarily exist between the Park and the farm house when it was known who his wife was. In his estimation the Leaches were nobodies, and he could not have them running in and out of his house and treating him with the familiarity of a son and brother, as he was

sure they would do if he did not stop it. If Mildred would consent to remain incognito while at the Park the annoyance would be prevented, and this consent he tried to gain by many specious arguments. His real reason, he knew, must be kept from sight, and so he asked it as a personal favor, saying it would please him very much and be a kind of excitement for her.

"Possibly you will be recognized," he said; "and if so, all right; if not, we will tell them just before we go to New York in the autumn and enjoy their surprise."

He did not add that, once away from Rocky Point, it would probably be long before he took her there again. He only talked of the plan as a joke, which Mildred did not quite see. She was willing to keep the secret until she met them, but to keep it longer was absurd and foolish, she said, and involved a deception, which she abhorred.

"I accepted you partly that I might be near them and see them every day," she said, "and am longing to throw my arms around mother's neck and tell her I have come back."

"And so you shall in time, but humor my whim for once. You will not be sorry," Mr. Thornton pleaded, and Mildred consented at last, and felt in a measure repaid when she saw how happy it made Mr. Thornton, whose real motive she did not guess.

This was the last of April, and six weeks later Mildred was Mrs. Giles Thornton, traveling through Scotland and Wales and trying to believe herself happy in her husband's love and the costly gifts he lavished upon her. She had been courted and admired as Fanny Gardner, but the deference paid her now and her inde-

pendence were very sweet to her, and if she could have forgotten Hugh and been permitted to make herself known to her family, she would have been content at least on the morning when she left New York and started for Thornton Park.

CHAPTER VI.

MRS. GILES THORNTON.

She was very lovely in all the fullness of her matured beauty as she stepped from the train at Rocky Point, and with her large bright eyes swept the crowd of curious people gathered to see her, not one of whom she recognized. A handsome open carriage from Brewster's, sent up a few days before for this occasion, was waiting for them, and with a half bow to those who ventured to salute her husband, Mildred seated herself in it and was driven through the well-remembered street, her heart beating so loudly that she could hear it distinctly as she drew near the top of the hill from which she knew she would see her old home and possibly her mother. And when the hill top was reached and she saw the house with its doors opened wide, and from the upper window of what had been hers and Bessie's room a muslin curtain blowing in and out, she grew so white that her husband laid his hand on hers, and said, "Don't take it so hard, darling. You are doing it to please me."

"Yes, but it seems as if I must stop here," she an-

swered faintly as she leaned foward to look at the house around which there was no sign of life, or stir, except the moving of the curtain and the gambols of two kittens playing in the doorway where Mildred half expected to meet the glance of Bessie's blue eyes and see the gleam of Charlie's golden hair.

But Charlie was lying on the mountain side, and Bessie, although out of sight, was watching the carriage and the beautiful stranger in whom she saw no trace of her sister.

"I've seen her," Bessie said, as she went into her mother's room, "and she is very lovely, with such a bright color on her cheeks. And so young to be Mr. Thornton's wife! I wonder if she loves him. I couldn't."

"No. I suppose you prefer Gerard," Mrs. Leach replied, while Bessie answered blushingly, "Of course I do. Poor Gerard! How angry his father will be when he knows about Tom and me, too. Gerard was going to tell him at once, but I persuaded him to wait until the honeymoon was over. Just two months I'll give him, and during that time I mean to cultivate Mrs. Thornton and get her on my side. I hope she is not proud like him. She did not look so."

Bessie had been at the Park that morning helping Alice give the last touches to the rooms intended for the bride. These had been finished in the tints which Mr. Thornton had prescribed. Everything was new, from the carpets on the floors to the lace-canopied bedstead of brass. There were flowers everywhere in great profusion, roses mostly of every variety, and in a glass on a bracket in a corner, Bessie had put a bunch of June pinks from her own garden, explaining to Alice

that her mother had sent them to the bride, as they were her favorite flowers and would make the rooms so sweet. Everything was finished at last, and after Bessie was gone Alice had nothing to do but to wait for the coming of the carriage which she soon saw entering the Park. Mildred's face was very white and her voice trembled as she saw Alice in the distance and said, "I can't bear it. I came near shrieking to the old home that I was Mildred. I must tell Alice. I cannot be so hypocritical. There is no reason for it."

"No, no," and Mr. Thornton spoke a little sternly. "It is too late now, and you have promised. I wish it and have my reason. Ah, here we are, and there are Alice and Gerard."

They had stopped under the great archway at the side entrance where Gerard and Alice were waiting for them and scanning the bride curiously as she alighted and their father presented her to them,—not as their mother, but as "Mrs. Thornton, my wife."

All Mildred's color had come back and her face was glowing with excitement as she took Alice's hand; then unable to control herself, she threw her arms around the neck of the astonished girl and burst into a flood of tears, while Mr. Thornton looked on in dismay, dreading what might follow. He was himself beginning to think it a very foolish and unnatural thing to try to keep his wife's identity from her people, but he was not a man to give up easily, and once in a dilemma of his own making he would stay in it at any cost.

"She is very tired and must go to her room," he said to his daughter, who was crying herself, and holding Mildred's hands in her own.

Had Mildred tried she could have done nothing bet-

ter for her cause than she had done. Alice had been very doubtful as to whether she should like her new mother or not, but something in the eyes which looked so appealingly into hers, and in the tears she felt upon her cheek, and the clasp of the arms around the neck, disarmed all prejudice and made of her a friend at once. As for Gerard, he had never meant to be anything but friendly, and when the scene between the two ladies was over he came forward with the slow, quiet manner natural to him and said, "Now it is my turn to welcome Mrs. Thornton, who does not look as if she could have for a son a great six-footer like me. But I'll call you mother, if you say so."

"No, don't," Mildred answered, flashing on him a smile which made his heart beat rapidly and brought a thought of Bessie, who sometimes smiled like that.

Leading the way to Mildred's rooms, Alice said, as she threw open the door, "I hope you will like them."

"Like them! They are perfect," was Mildred's answer, as she walked through the apartments, feeling that it must be a dream from which she would bye-and-bye awaken. "And so many roses," she said, stopping here and there over a bowl or cluster of them until, guided by the perfume, she came upon the pinks her mother had sent to her.

Taking up the glass she held it for an instant while Alice said, "June pinks, perhaps you do not have them in England. They are old-fashioned flowers, but very sweet. A friend of mine, Bessie Leach, brought them for you from her mother, who is blind."

There was a low cry and a crash as the finger-glass fell to the floor and Mildred sank into the nearest

chair, white as ashes, with a look in her eyes which startled and frightened Alice.

"It is the heat and fatigue of the voyage. I was very seasick," Mildred said, trying to smile and recover herself, while Alice went for a towel to wipe up the water trickling over the carpet, and wondering if Mrs. Thornton was given to faintings and hysterics like this.

"She don't look like it," she thought, as she picked up and carried out the bits of glass and the pinks which had done the mischief.

When lunch was served Mildred was too ill to go down. A severe headache had come on, and for a time Alice sat by her couch bathing her forehead and brushing her hair, which was more a mottled than golden brown, for it was darker in some places than others, especially when seen in certain lights and shadows. But this only added to its beauty, and Alice ran her fingers through the shining mass, admiring the color and the texture and admiring the woman generally and answering the many questions which were asked her. Hungry at heart to hear something of her family, Mildred said to her, "Tell me of your friends. Have you any here? Girl friends, I mean."

"Only one with whom I am intimate," Alice replied, and then as girls will she went off into rhapsodies over Bessie Leach, and in a burst of confidence concluded by saying, "You must not tell papa, for he is not to know it yet, but Bessie is to be my sister. She is to marry Gerard."

"Marry Gerard!" and Mildred raised herself upon her elbow and shedding her heavy hair back from her face stared at Alice with an expression in her eyes

which the girl could not understand, and which made her wonder if her stepmother, too, were as proud as her father and would resent Gerard's choice.

This called forth another eulogy upon Bessie's beauty and sweetness, with many injunctions that Mildred should not repeat to her husband what had been told her.

"Nobody knows it for certain but Mr. McGregor and ourselves," she added, and then, turning her face away so that it could not be seen, Mildred said, "Mr. McGregor? That is your father's attorney. Is he a married man?"

The question was a singular one, but Alice was not quick to suspect, and answered laughingly, "Hugh McGregor married! Why, I don't suppose he has ever looked twice at any girl. He is a confirmed old bachelor, but very nice. Father thinks the world of him."

"Yes, oh, yes," Mildred moaned, as she clasped her hands over her forehead where the pain was so intense.

"You are worse. You are white as a sheet; let me call papa," Alice cried, alarmed at the look of anguish in the dark eyes and the gray pallor of the face which seemed to have grown pinched and thin in a moment.

But her husband was the last person whom Mildred wished to see then, and detaining Alice she said, "Don't call him, please. It will soon pass off, and don't think me ungrateful, either, but I'd rather be alone for a while. I may sleep and that will do me good."

And so, after darkening the room, Alice went out and left the wretched woman alone in her grief and pain.

"Mrs. Hayford was mistaken. Hugh is not engaged

to Bessie, and I am Mrs. Giles Thornton," she said, a little bitterly. "My ambition ought to be satisfied. I have made my own bed and must lie in it, and go on lying, too!"

She smiled faintly at her own joke and then continued: "If I had only resisted and come back Mildred Leach! But it is now too late, and Hugh will always despise me for the deception. Oh, Hugh!"

There was a spasmodic wringing of the hands, and then, as if ashamed of herself Mildred said, "I must not, will not be faithless to my husband, who loves me, I know, and I will be worthy of his love and make him happy, so help me Heaven!"

The vow was made and Mildred would keep it to the death. The might have been, which has broken so many hearts when the knowledge came too late, was put away and buried deep down in the inmost recesses of her soul, and when two hours later she awoke from a refreshing sleep and found her husband sitting by her, she put her hand in his just as she had never put it before, and did not shrink from him when he stooped down to caress her.

CHAPTER VII.

CALLS AT THE PARK.

It was early the next morning when Mildred arose and stepping out upon the balcony looked toward the town which had changed so much since she was there last. Across the noisy little river which went dashing

along in its rocky bed at the foot of the mountain, one or two tall stacks of manufactories were belching forth their smoke, while new churches and hotels and villas dotted what had been pasture lands when she went away. Standing upon tiptoe she could see the chimney top of her old home, and just over it, up the mountain road, the evergreens in the cemetery where her father and Charlie were lying.

"I'll go there some day alone and find their graves," she was thinking when her husband joined her.

"I am sure you are better, you look so fresh and bright ; but it is time you were getting ready for breakfast," he said, as he gave her a little caress.

And Mildred was very bright when she at last went with her husband to the breakfast room, a half-opened rose which he had gathered for her at her throat, and another at her belt. It was her first appearance at her own table, and Mr. Thornton led her proudly to her seat behind the coffee urn and looked at her admiringly while she assumed the rôle of mistress as naturally as if she had all her life been accustomed to her present surroundings. Alice had kissed her effusively as she came in, hoping she was quite well and thinking her more beautiful than on the previous day. Gerard, who was less demonstrative but more observant than his sister, greeted her cordially and then sat watching her, curious and puzzled by something in her face or manner or voice which seemed familiar to him.

"She is dazzlingly lovely. I wonder how Bessie will look beside her," he thought, as after breakfast he started for the farm house as was his daily custom.

It was very warm that morning and Mildred had seated herself with a book upon the shaded balcony

opening from her room, when word was brought her that her husband wished to see her on the front piazza.

"There's a gentleman with him,—Mr. McGregor," the servant said, and Mildred felt as if her heart had suddenly risen in her throat, making her choke and gasp for breath.

She knew he would come some time, but had not expected him so soon, and she shook like a leaf as she stood a moment before her mirror.

"He will never know me," she said, as side by side with the reflection of herself she saw the girl of fifteen years ago; sallow and thin and slight, with eyes too big for her face, and hair too heavy for her head; the girl with the faded calico dress and high-necked apron, who seemed to walk beside her as she descended the broad staircase and went through the hall and out upon the piazza, where she heard her husband's voice, and Hugh's.

"I came on business, and intended calling later, but I shall be glad to see Mrs. Thornton," she heard him say, and then the smothered, choking sensation left her, and, with a little unconscious nod to the other Mildred at her side, she whispered:

"I shall pull through."

Hugh was standing half way down the piazza, leaning against a column, with his straw hat in his hand, fanning himself, just as she had seen him do a hundred times when they were boy and girl together, and he was looking at the shadowy Mildred at her side just as he now looked at her, the tall, elegant, perfectly self-possessed woman, coming slowly towards him, every movement graceful, and every action that of one sure of herself, and accustomed to the admiration she saw in

his eyes,—the same kind, honest blue eyes which she remembered so well, but which had in them no sign of recognition as he came forward to meet her, and offering her his hand, welcomed her to Rocky Point, "and America," he added, while a blood-red stain crept up from her neck to her ear as she felt the deception she was allowing. Hugh was not as polished as Mr. Thornton, nor were his clothes as faultless and fashionable, but he was every whit a gentleman, and looked it, too, as he stood for a moment talking to Mildred in the voice she knew so well and which had grown richer and deeper with the lapse of time, and moved her strangely as she listened to it again.

"I think I should have known him anywhere," she thought, as she answered his remarks, her own voice, in which the English accent was predominant, steady and firm, but having in it occasionally a tone which made Hugh start a little, it was so like something he had heard before, but could not define.

There was nothing in this English woman, as he believed her to be, which could remind him of Mildred Leach, who was never once in his mind during the few minutes he was talking with her. And still she puzzled him, and all that morning, after his return to his office, her lovely face and especially her eyes haunted him and looked at him from every paper and book he touched, and he heard the tone, which had struck him as familiar, calling to him everywhere, and bringing at last a thought of Mildred Leach and the July morning when she had shelled her peas by the door, and given him a pod as a souvenir. Where was she now, he wondered, and would she come back in the autumn? Probably not. She had held out similar promises before

only to break them. She was weaned entirely from all her old associations, and it did not matter, he said to himself, wondering, as he often did, why he had so long kept in his mind the little wayward girl, who had never done anything but tease and worry him, and tell him of the great things she meant to do.

"She has been a long time doing it, unless she calls a life of dependence a great thing," he said, and then his thoughts drifted to Thornton Park and the bride, who was troubled with no more calls that day, and so had time to rest and go about her handsome house and grounds, much handsomer than when she first rang the front door bell and was told to go to the side entrance by the man who was her husband now, and prouder of her than of all his other surroundings.

The next day there were many visitors at the Park, mostly strangers to Mildred, although a few of them had been known to her in childhood, but like Hugh, they saw no resemblance in her to the "oldest Leach girl," as she was called by the neighbors who remembered her. Of the bride there was but one verdict, "The most elegant and agreeable woman that has ever been in Rocky Point," was said of her by all, for Mildred, while bearing herself like a princess, was so gracious and friendly that she took every heart by storm.

It was late in the day when Bessie started to make her call with Tom. Dinner was over and Mildred, who, with her husband and Gerard and Alice, was sitting upon the piazza, saw them as they turned an angle in the shrubbery and came up the avenue.

"Oh, there's Bessie, Allie cried, springing to her feet, while Mildred's heart began to beat wildly as she glanced at Mr. Thornton, on whese brow there was a

dark frown, the first she had seen since she was his wife, and this quieted her at once, for she readily guessed its cause. She knew he had not married her family, and had begun to suspect that he meant to keep her from them as much as possible.

"But he cannot do it," she thought, and turning to him she said in a low tone, "They are mine; my own flesh and blood, and for my sake treat them politely. It is the first favor I have asked of you."

There was something in her eyes which made him think she might be dangerous if roused, and for aught he knew she might bring the whole family there to live, or leave him for them, and swallowing his pride, he went forward to meet his visitors with so much cordiality that Tom, who had never received the slightest civility from the great man, thought, to himself, "By Jove, she's made him over."

"My wife, Mrs. Thornton; Miss Leach and Mr. Leach," Mr. Thornton said, and Mildred's hand, cold and nerveless, was taken by a hand as white and soft as her own, while Bessie's blue eyes looked curiously at her, and Bessie was saying the commonplace things which strangers say to each other.

"How lovely she is," Mildred thought, hardly able to restrain herself from folding the sunny, bright-faced girl in her arms and sobbing and crying over her.

But Tom was speaking to her now, and she was conscious of a feeling of pride as she looked at the tall, handsome, manly fellow, and knew he was her brother. Tom was like his mother, and Bessie like her father, while Mildred was like neither, and one could scarcely have seen any resemblance between them as they sat talking together until the moon came up over the hill

and it was time to go. Bessie had devoted herself to Mildred, who fascinated her greatly, and who had adroitly led her to talk of herself and her home and her mother. Mildred spoke of the pinks, her voice trembling as she sent her thanks and love to the blind woman whom she was soon coming to see.

"Oh, I'm so glad," Bessie exclaimed, in her impulsive way, "and mother will be glad too. She sent the pinks because they are her favorite flowers and she says they remind her of Milly, who used to love them so much; that's my sister, who has been abroad many years. I scarcely remember her at all."

"Oh," came like a moan from Mildred, who felt as if a blow had struck her heart, it throbbed so painfully at the mention of her old name by the sister who did not know her, and for an instant she was tempted to scream out the truth and bring the foolish farce to an end.

Then she felt her husband's hand on her arm and the power of his will overmastering her, and keeping her quiet. But she was glad when the interview was over and she was free to go by herself and sob out her anguish and shame and regret, that she had ever lent herself to this deception. Of the two, Bessie and Tom, she had felt more drawn toward the latter, of whom any sister might be proud, and when bidding him good-night she had held his hand with a pressure which surprised him, while her lips quivered and her eyes had in them a wistful look, as if she were longing to say, "Oh, Tom; my brother." And Tom had felt the magnetism of her eyes and manner, and he said to Alice, who, with Gerard, walked with them to the Park gate, "I say, Allie, your stepmother is a stunner, and no mistake,

and I do believe she took a fancy to me. Why, I actually thought she squeezed my hand a little, and she looked as if she'd like to kiss me. It wouldn't hurt me much to kiss her."

"Oh, Tom; and right before Allie," Bessie said laughingly, and Tom replied, "Can't a fellow fall in love with his stepmother-in-law, if he wants to?" and the arm he had thrown around Alice tightened its hold upon her.

Here they all laughed together and went on freely discussing the woman, who, on her knees in her room was praying to be forgiven for the lie she was living, and for strength to meet her mother, as that would be the hardest ordeal of all. Once she resolved to defy her husband and proclaim her identity, but gave that up with the thought that it was not very long until September, and she would wait at least until she had seen her mother.

CHAPTER VIII.

MILDRED AND HER MOTHER.

It was several days before Mildred went to the farm house, from which her husband would have kept her altogether if he could have done so. His determination to separate her as much as possible from her family had been constantly increasing since his return, and he had fully made up his mind to leave Rocky Point by the first of September and advertise the Park for sale, thus

cutting off all chance for intimacy in the future when it was known who she was. She could do for her family all she pleased, he thought, but she must not be intimate with them, and on his way to the house, for he drove her there himself, he reminded her again of her promise, saying to her very kindly, as he helped her to alight :

" I can trust you, Milly, and am sorry for you, for I know it will be hard to meet your mother and keep silence."

It was harder than Mildred herself had anticipated, for the sight of the familiar place, the walk, the garden, and the brook, where she had waded barefoot many a time in summer and drawn her sled in winter with Hugh at her side, nearly unmanned her, and every nerve was quivering as she rang the bell in the door of the little, square entry, with the steep, narrow stairs winding up to the chambers above. It was Bessie who answered the ring, blushing when she saw her visitor and apologizing for her appearance. The hired girl was gone for a day or two, leaving her maid of all work, and as this was baking day she was deep in the mysteries of pastry and bread, with her long, bib apron on and her hands covered with flour.

" Never mind me," Mildred said, as she took in the situation. " It was thoughtless in me to come in the morning. Please keep to your work while I talk with your mother. I will call upon you some other time. Oh, Gerard, you here ?" she continued, as through the door opening into the kitchen she saw the young man seated by the table pitting cherries which Bessie was to make into pies. " That's right ; help all you can," she added with a smile, glad he was there, as it would

leave her alone and freer with her mother, whom she found in the bright, sunny room, built partly with the money she had sent.

Mrs. Leach was always very neat and clean, but this morning she was particularly so, in her black cambric dress and spotless white apron, with the widow's cap resting on her snowy hair. Her hands were folded together, and she was leaning back in her chair as if asleep, when Mildred's voice roused her, and a moment after Bessie said :

" Here, mother, is Mrs. Thornton, and as I am so busy I will leave her with you for a little while."

Suddenly, as if she had been shot, Mrs. Leach started forward, and rubbing her eyes, in which there was an eager, expectant look, said :

" I must have been dozing, for I dreamed that Milly had come and I heard her voice in the kitchen. Mis' Thornton here, did you say ? I am very proud to meet her ;" and the hands were outstretched, groping in the helpless way habitual with the blind. And Mildred took the hands in hers and drawing a chair to her mother's side sat down so close to her that Mrs. Leach felt her hot breath stir her hair and knew she was being looked at very closely. But how closely she did not dream, for Mildred's soul was in her eyes, which scanned the worn face where suffering and sorrow had left their impress. And what a sad, sweet face it was, so sweet and sad that Mildred involuntarily took it between her hands and kissed it passionately ; then, unable to control herself, she laid her head on her mother's bosom and sobbed like a little child.

" What is it ? Oh, Mrs. Thornton, you scare me. What makes you cry so ? Who are you ?" Mrs. Leach

said, excitedly, for she was frightened by the strange conduct of her visitor.

"You must excuse me," Mildred said, lifting up her head. "The sight of you unnerved me, for my,—my mother is blind?"

She did not at all mean to say what she knew would involve more deception of a certain kind, but she had said it and could not take it back, and it was a sufficient explanation of her emotion to Mrs. Leach, who said:

"Your mother blind! Dear,—dear,—how did it happen, and has she been so long? Where does she live, and how could she bear to have you leave her? Dear, dear!"

"Don't talk of her now, please. I can't bear it," Mildred replied, and thinking to herself, "Homesick, poor thing," Mrs. Leach, whose ideas of the world were narrowed to her own immediate surroundings, began to talk of herself and her family in a desultory kind of way, while Mildred listened with a feeling of half wonder, half pain.

All her associations while with Mrs. Harwood had been with highly-cultivated people, and in one sense her mother was new to her and she realized as she had never done before how different she was from Mr. Thornton and herself. "But she is my mother, and nothing can change my love for her," she thought, as she studied her and the room, which was cozy and bright, though very plainly furnished as compared with the elegant boudoir where she had made her own toilet. There was the tall clock in the corner which had ticked away the hours and days she once thought so dreary and lonely; the desk between the windows, where her father used to keep his papers, and his old, worn pocket-

book, in which there was never much money, and on the bed in another corner was a patchwork quilt, a few blocks of which Mildred had pieced herself, recognizing them now with a start and a throb of pain as she saw in two of them bits of the frock she had bought for Charlie with the berries picked in her husband's pasture. She had been turned out then as a trespasser where she was mistress now, and there were diamonds on her white hands, which had once washed potatoes for dinner, her special abomination, and her gown had cost more than all her mother's wardrobe. And there she sat in a kind of dream, while the other Mildred of years ago sat close beside her, confusing and bewildering her, so that she hardly heard half her mother was saying about Tom and Bessie, the dearest children in the world. But when at last her own name was mentioned she started and was herself again, and listened as her mother went on :

"I've another girl, Mildred by name, but I call her Milly. She's been in Europe for years, and has been everywhere and speaks French and German, and writes such beautiful letters."

She was evidently very proud of her absent daughter, and the lady beside her, whose pallid face she could not see, clasped her hands and held her breath as she continued :

"I never s'posed she'd stay so long when she went away, or I couldn't let her go ; but somehow or other she's staid on and on till she's been gone many a year ; many a year has Milly been gone, fifteen years come fall, and now 'tain't likely I should know her, if I could see. You won't be offended, Mis' Thornton, if I say that something about you makes me think of Milly ; some-

thing in your voice at first, and you laid your head on my neck and cried just as she used to when things went wrong and fretted her, which they mostly did, for she wasn't meant to be poor, and was always wantin' to be rich and grand. I guess she is grand now she's been in foreign places so much, but she's comin' home in the fall; she wrote me so in her last letter. You'll call on her, won't you?"

"Yes," Mildred stammered, scarcely able to keep herself from crying out: "Oh, mother, I *have* come. I am Milly," but a thought of her husband restrained her, and thinking how she would make amends in the future, when freed from her promise of secrecy, she listened again, while her mother talked of her father and Charlie, and lastly of Hugh McGregor, who was a great favorite with the old lady.

"Jest like my own boy," Mrs. Leach said, "and so kind to Tom. He lent him money to go to school, and helps him a sight in his law books, and helps on the farm, too, when he gets time, which is not often, for Hugh is a first-rate lawyer and pleads at the bar like a judge. I believe he's comin'. Yes, I hear his step," and her face lighted up as Hugh appeared in the open door.

"Good morning, Mrs. Leach," he called cheerily. "I beg your pardon, good morning, Mrs. Thornton," and he bowed deferentially to the lady as he came in with a cluster of lovely roses, which he laid in Mrs. Leach's lap, saying, "Here are some of Milly's roses. They opened this morning and I brought them to you. Shall I give one to Mrs. Thornton?"

"Yes, do; the fairest and best. I think she must be like them, though I can't see her," Mrs. Leach replied,

and selecting one of the finest, Hugh offered it to Mildred, whose cheeks rivaled it in color, as she held it near them to inhale its perfume.

It was of the variety known as "Souvenir d'un Ami," and the original stock had been bought by Mrs. Leach two or three years before with some money sent her by Mildred, whose name she had given to the rose. This she explained to Mildred, adding that Mr. McGregor was so fond of the rose that he had taken a slip from her garden and planted it under his office window.

"He calls it Milly's rose," she added, "for he and Milly were great friends, as children. Hugh, ain't there something about Mis' Thornton that makes you think of Milly?"

Mildred's face was scarlet, but she tried to hide it by bending her head very low as she fastened the rose to the bosom of her dress, while Hugh answered laughingly, "Why, no. Milly was small and thin, and a child when we saw her, while Mrs. Thornton is ——" here he stopped, confused and uncertain as to what he ought to say next. But when Mildred's eyes flashed upon him expectantly, he added very gallantly, "Mrs. Thornton is more like Milly's roses."

"Thank you for the compliment, Mr. McGregor. I will remember it and keep Milly's rose, too," Mildred said, with a little dash of coquetry, and a ring in her voice which made Hugh think of the Milly who, he supposed, was thousands of miles away.

Just then there was the sound of wheels stopping before the house, and Gerard, with his apron still tied around his neck, for he was not yet through with his culinary duties, came to the door, saying, "Mrs. Thornton, father is waiting for you."

"Yes, I'll be there directly," Mildred replied, rising hurriedly to say good-bye, and giving her hand to her mother, who fondled it a moment and then said to her, "Your hands are soft as a baby's, and there are many rings on your fingers. I think I know how they look, and I have felt your hair, but not your face. Tom and Bessie say it is handsome. Would you mind my feeling it? That's my way of seeing."

Mildred was glad that Hugh had stepped in to the next room and could not see her agitation, as she knelt beside the blind woman, whose hands moved slowly over her face and then up to her hair, where they rested a moment as if in benediction, while she said, "You are lovely, I am sure, and good, too, and your poor blind mother must miss you so much. Didn't she hate to part with you?"

"Yes, oh, yes, and my heart is aching for her. Please bless me as if you were my mother and I your daughter Milly," was Mildred's sobbing reply, her tears falling like rain as the shaking hands pressed heavily upon her bowed head, while the plaintive voice said slowly, "God bless you, child, and make you happy with your husband, and comfort your poor mother while you are away from her. Amen."

"Will you tell Mrs. Thornton I am in a hurry?" Mr. Thornton said to Bessie, loudly enough for Mildred to hear, and wiping her tears away, she went out through the side door where her husband was standing. with a frown upon his face, caused not so much by her delay as by the glimpse he was sure he had caught of his son, in the kitchen, with a checked apron tied round his neck and a big cherry stain on his forehead.

Nor did the sight of his wife's flushed cheeks and red

eyes help to restore his equanimity, and although he said nothing then, Mildred felt that he was displeased, as he helped her into the phaeton and took his seat beside her.

CHAPTER IX.

GERARD AND HIS FATHER.

Gathering up the reins and driving very slowly, he began :

" Was that Gerard whom I saw tricked out as a kitchen cook ?"

" Gerard was there. Yes," Mildred answered, and he continued in that cool, determined tone which means more than words themselves, " Is he often there ? Is he interested in your sister ? If he is, it must stop. I tell you it must stop," he added more emphatically as his wife made no reply. "I married you because ——" he paused a moment and looked at the woman sitting at his side in all her glowing beauty, and then went on in a softer tone,—" because I loved you more than I loved my pride, which, however, is so great, that it will not quietly submit to my son's marrying your sister."

" Does he intend to ?" Mildred asked so coolly that it exasperated him, and he replied, " He will not with my consent, and he will hardly dare do so without it. Why, he has scarcely a dollar of his own, and no business either. More's the pity, or he wouldn't be capering round a kitchen in an old woman's apron."

" I think it was Bessie's," Mildred said quietly, and

angrier than ever, her husband continued. "You told me in Paris that your sister was engaged to Mr. McGregor."

"It was a mistake," Mildred said, her heart beating heavily as she thought of all the mistake had done for her.

"Yes," Mr. Thornton repeated, "I ventured to rally Hugh a little this morning, and he denied the story while something in his manner aroused a suspicion which the sight of Gerard confirmed. What was he doing there?"

"Pitting cherries for Bessie," Mildred said with provoking calmness, and he continued, "I tell you it shall not be. Gerard Thornton must look ——" here he stopped, not quite willing to finish the sentence, which Milly, however, finished for him—"must look higher than Bessie Leach?"

"Yes, that's what I mean, although I might not have said it, for I do not wish to wound you unnecessarily; but I tell you again it must not be, and you are not to encourage it, or encourage so much visiting between my children and the Leach's. Why, that girl,—Bessie, I think is her name,—is at the Park half the time. Heavens! What would it be if they knew who you were! I was wise to do as I did, but I am sorry I came here at all, and I mean to return to New York earlier than I intended, and if necessary, sell the place. That will break up the whole business."

To this Mildred made no reply, but sat thinking, with a growing conviction that she now knew her husband's real reason for wishing to keep her identity a secret during their stay at the Park. It was to prevent the intimacy which he knew would ensue between her and

her family, if they knew who she was, and with all the strength of her will she rebelled against it. "I will not encourage the young people, but he shall not keep me from my mother," she thought, and the face at which her husband looked a little curiously as he helped her from the phaeton, had in it an expression he did not understand.

"I believe she's got a good deal of the old Harry in her after all, but I shall be firm," he thought, as he drove to the stable and gave his horse to the groom.

Lunch was nearly over when Gerard appeared, the cherry stains washed from his face, but showing conspicuously on his nails and the tips of his fingers, from which he had tried in vain to remove them.

"Why, Gerard, what have you been doing to your hands?" Alice asked, and with an amused look at Mildred, he replied, "Stoning cherries with them," while his father hastily left the table.

"Gerard," he said, pausing a moment in the doorway, "Come to the library after lunch. I want to see you."

"Yes, sir," Gerard answered, feeling as certain then of what was coming as he did twenty minutes later when his father asked abruptly, "How old are you?"

"Twenty-five last May."

"Twenty-five,—yes; and been graduated three years, and no business yet. Nothing to do but wear a kitchen apron and stone cherries for Bessie Leach. I saw you. I don't like it, and as soon as we are in New York I shall find something for you to do."

At the mention of Bessie, Gerard had stiffened, for his father's tone was offensive. But his answer was respectful: "I shall be glad of something to do, sir, although I do not think myself altogether to blame for

having been an idler so long. When I left college you know I was in so bad health that you and the doctor both, fearing I had inherited my mother's malady, prescribed perfect rest and quiet for a long time. But I am strong now and will do anything you think best. I prefer law, and would like to go into Mr. McGregor's office. I can get on faster there than in New York."

"Yes, and see Bessie Leach oftener," Mr. Thornton began angrily. "I tell you I will not have it. The girl is well enough and pretty enough, but I won't have it, and if you are getting too much interested in her, quit her at once."

"Quit Bessie!" Gerard said. "Quit Bessie! Never! She has promised to be my wife!"

"Your wife!" Mr. Thornton repeated, aghast with anger and surprise, for he never dreamed matters had gone so far.

"Yes, my wife. I was only waiting for you to know her better to tell you of our engagement," Gerard replied, and then for half an hour, Mildred, who was in her room over the library, heard the sound of excited voices,—Gerard's low and determined, and his father's louder and quite as decided.

And when the interview was over, and her husband came up to her, he said:

"I am very sorry, my darling, because, in a way, the trouble touches you through your sister; but you must see that it is not a suitable match for my son. She is not you, and has not had your advantages. She is a plain country girl, and if Gerard persists in marrying her he will have no help from me, either before or after my death."

"You mean you will disinherit him?" Mildred asked, and he replied:

"Yes, just that; and I have told him so, and given him the summer in which to make up his mind. He has some Quixotic idea of studying law with McGregor, which will of course keep him here after we have gone. I don't intend to live in a quarrel, and shall say no more to him on the subject, or try to control his actions in any way. If he goes with us to New York, all right; and if he chooses to stay here, I shall know what to do."

A slight inclination of Mildred's head was her only reply, until her husband said:

"Do you think Bessie would marry him if she knew he was penniless?"

And then she answered proudly: "I do," and left the room, saying to herself as she went out into the beautiful grounds, whose beauty she did not see: "What will he do when he hears of Alice and Tom? Three Leaches instead of one. Poor Tom! Poor Bessie! And I am powerless to help them."

CHAPTER X.

IN THE CEMETERY.

As Mr. Thornton had said, he did not like to live in a quarrel, and after his interview with his son, he tried to appear just as he had done before, and when Bessie came to the Park, as she often did, he treated her civilly, and insensibly found himself admiring her beauty

and grace, and thinking to himself, "If she had money she might do."

Upon Mildred he laid no restrictions with regard to her intercourse with her family, feeling intuitively that they would not be heeded. And thus she was free to see her mother as often as she liked, and it was remarked by the villagers that the proud mistress of Thornton Park went more frequently to the farmhouse than anywhere else. Many a morning she spent in the pleasant room, listening while her mother talked, mostly of Mildred, whose long silence was beginning to trouble her.

"It is weeks since I heard from her. She said in her last letter it might be some time before she wrote again, but I am getting anxious," she would say, while Mildred comforted her with the assurance that no news was good news, and that perhaps her daughter was intending to surprise her by coming upon her unexpectedly some day.

"I am certain of it; I am something of a prophet, and I know Milly will come;" she would say, as she smoothed her mother's snowy hair, or caressed her worn face, which always lighted up with gladness when she came, and grew sadder when she went away.

By some strange coincidence, it frequently happened that Hugh called upon Mrs. Leach when Mildred was there, and always stopped to talk with her. But Mildred was never quite at ease with him. Her eyes never met his squarely, while her brilliant color came and went as rapidly as if she were a shy school-girl confronted with her master instead of the elegant Mrs. Thornton, whose beauty was the theme of every tongue, stirring even him a little, but bringing no

thought of Mildred, of whom he sometimes spoke to her mother. As yet Milly had found no chance to visit her father's and Charlie's graves, which she knew she could find without difficulty, as her mother had told her of the headstones which Tom had put there in the spring. But she was only biding her time, and one afternoon in August, when she had been in Rocky Point six weeks or more, she drove up the mountain road to call upon some New Yorkers who were stopping at the new hotel. It was late when she left the hotel, and the full moon was just rising as she reached the entrance to the cemetery on her return home. Calling to the driver to let her alight, she bade him go on and leave her, saying she preferred to walk, as the evening was so fine. Mildred had already won the reputation among her servants of being rather eccentric, and thinking this one of her cranks, the man drove on, while she went into the grounds, where the dead were lying, the headstones gleaming white through the clump of firs and evergreens which grew so thickly as to conceal many of them from view, and to hide completely the figure of a man seated in the shadow of one of them not very far from the graves to which she was making her way. Hugh had also been up the mountain road on foot, and coming back had struck into the cemetery as a shouter route home. As he was tired and the night very warm, he sat down in an armchair under a thick pine, whose shadow screened him from observation, but did not prevent his outlook upon the scene around him. He had heard the sound of wheels stopping near the gate, but he thought no more of it until he saw Mildred coming slowly across the yard diagonally from the gate, holding up her skirts, for the

dew was beginning to fall, and making, as it seemed to him, for the very spot where he was sitting. At first he did not recognize her, but when removing her hat as if its weight oppressed her she suddenly raised her head so that the moonlight fell upon her face, he started in surprise, and wondered why she was there. Whose grave had she come to find? Some one's, evidently, for she was looking carefully about her, and afraid to startle her, Hugh sat still and watched, a feeling like nightmare stealing over him as she entered the little enclosure where the Leaches were buried. He could see the two stones distinctly, and he could see and hear her, too, as leaning upon the taller and bending low so that her eyes were on a level with the lettering, she said, as if reading. "John Leach, and Charlie; these are the graves. Oh, father! oh, Charlie! do you know I have come back after so many years only to find you dead? And I loved you so much. Oh, Charlie, my baby brother!"

Here her voice was choked with sobs, and Hugh could hear no more, but he felt as if the weight of many tons was holding him down and making him powerless to speak or move, had he wished to do so. And so he sat riveted to the spot, looking at the woman with a feeling half akin to terror and doubt, as to whether it were her ghost, or Mildred herself weeping over her dead. As her smothered sobs met his ear and he thought he heard his own name, he softly whispered, "Milly," and stretched his arms towards her, but let them drop again at his side and watched the strange scene to its close. Once Mildred seemed to be praying, for she knelt upon the grass, with her face on her father's grave, and he heard the word "Forgive."

Then she arose and walked slowly back to the road, where she was lost to view. As long as he could see the flutter of her white dress Hugh looked after her, and when it disappeared from sight he felt for a few moments as if losing his consciousness, so great was the shock upon his nervous system. Mrs. Thornton was Mildred Leach,—the girl he knew now he had never given up, and whose coming in the autumn he had been looking forward to with so much pleasure. She had come, and she was another man's wife, and what was worse than all she was keeping her identity from her friends and daily living a lie. Did her husband know it, or was he, too, deceived?

"Probably," Hugh said, with a feeling for an instant as if he hated her for the deception. But that soon passed away, and he tried to make himself believe that it was a hallucination of his brain and he had not seen her by those two graves. He would examine them and see, for if a form of flesh and blood had been there the long, damp grass would be trampled down in places. It was trampled down, and in the hollow between the graves a small, white object was lying.

"Her handkerchief. She has been here," he whispered, as he stooped to pick it up. "If her name is on it I shall know for sure."

There was a name upon it, but so faintly traced that he could not read it in the moonlight, which was now obscured by clouds. A storm was rising, and hastening his steps towards home he was soon in his own room and alone to think it out. Taking the handkerchief from his pocket, he held it to the light and read "M. F. Thornton." There could be no mistake. It was Mrs. Thornton he had seen in the cemetery, but was it Mil-

dred? "M. F.," he repeated aloud, remembering suddenly that Mildred's name was Mildred Frances, which would correspond with the initials.

"It is Milly," he continued, "but why this deception? Is she ashamed to have her family claim her? Ashamed to have her husband know who she was; and did she pass for Fanny Gardner in Europe?"

Again a feeling of resentment and hatred came over him, but passed quickly, for although he might despise and condemn, he could not hate her. She had been too much to him in his boyhood, and thoughts of her had influenced every action of his life thus far. Just what he had expected, if he had expected anything, he did not know, but whatever it was, it was cruelly swept away. He had lost her absolutely, for when his respect for her was gone, she was gone forever, and laying his head upon the table he wrestled for a few moments with his grief and loss, as strong men sometimes wrestle with a great and bitter pain.

"If she were dead," he said, "it would not be so hard to bear. But to see her the beautiful woman she is,—to know she is Mildred and makes no sign even to her poor, blind mother, is terrible."

He was walking the floor now, with Milly's handkerchief held tightly in his hands, wondering what he should do with it.

"I'll keep it," he said. "It is all I have left of her except the lock of hair and the peas she gave to me. What a fool I was in those days," and he laughed as he recalled the morning when Milly threw him the pod which he had not seen in a year.

But he brought it out now, and laughed again when he saw how hard and shriveled were both the peas.

"Stony and hard like her. I believe I'll throw them away and end the tomfoolery," he said.

But he put them back in the box, which he called a little grave, and took up next the curl of tangled hair, comparing its color in his mind with Mrs. Thornton's hair, which, from its peculiar, mottled appearance, had attracted his notice. How had she changed it, he wondered, and then remembering to have heard of dyes, to which silly, fashionable women sometimes resorted, he was sure that he hated her, and putting the box away went to bed with that thought uppermost in his mind, but with Milly's handkerchief folded under his pillow.

CHAPTER XI.

WHAT FOLLOWED.

When Hugh awoke the next morning it was with a confused idea that something had gone out of his life and left it a blank, and he asked himself what it was and why he was feeling so badly. But memory soon brought back a recollection of the secret he held and would hold to the end, for he had no intention of betraying Mildred or charging her with deception, if, indeed, he ever spoke to her again. He had no desire to do so, he thought, and then it came to him suddenly that there was to be a grand party at Thornton Park that night, and that he had ordered a dress suit for the occasion.

"But I shall not go," he said to himself, as he made his hurried toilet. "I could not bear to see Milly

tricked out in the gewgaws and jewels for which she sold herself."

And firm in this resolution, he went about his usual duties in his office, clinching his fist and setting his teeth when several times during the day he heard Tom Leach talking eagerly of the party, which he expected to enjoy so much. Tom did not ask if Hugh was going, expecting it as a matter of course, and Hugh kept his own counsel, and was silent and moody and even cross for him, and at about four o'clock sat down to write his regret. Then, greatly to his surprise, he found how much he really wanted to see Mildred once more and study her in the new character she had assumed.

"I shall not talk with her and I don't know that I shall touch her hand, but I am half inclined to go," he thought, and tearing up his regret, he decided to wait awhile and see; and as a result of waiting and seeing, nine o'clock found him walking up the broad avenue to the house, which was ablaze with light from attic to basement, and filled with guests, who crowded the parlors and halls and stairways, so that it was some little time before he could fight his way to the dressing-room, which was full of young men and old men in high collars, low vests and swallow-tails, many of them very red in the face and out of breath with their frantic efforts to fit gloves a size too small to hands unused to them, for fashionable parties like this were very rare in Rocky Point.

Mildred had not wished it, as she shrank from society rather than courted it, but Gerard and Alice were anxious for it, and Mr. Thornton willing, and under the supervision of his children cards were sent to so many that the proud man grew hot and cold by turns as he

thought of having his sacred precincts invaded by Tom, Dick and Harry, and the rest of them, as he designated the class of people whom he neither knew, nor cared to know. But Alice and Gerard knew them, and they were all there, Tom and Bessie with the rest, Tom by far the handsomest young man of all the young men, and the one most at his ease, while Bessie, in her pretty muslin dress, with only flowers for ornament, would have been the belle of the evening, but for the hostess, whose brilliant beauty, heightened by the appliances of dress, which so well became her fine figure, dazzled every one as she stood by her husband's side in her gown of creamy satin and lace, with diamonds flashing on her white neck and arms and gleaming in her hair. How queenly she was, with no trace of the storm which had swept over her the previous night, and Hugh, when he descended the stairs and first caught sight of her, stopped a few moments, and leaning against the railing, watched her receiving her guests with a smile on her lips and a look in her eyes which he remembered now so well, and wondered he had not recognized before. And as he looked there came up before him another Milly than this one with the jewels and satin and lace, a Milly with tangled hair and calico frock and gingham apron, shelling her peas in the doorway and predicting that she would some day be the mistress of Thornton Park. She was there now, and no grand duchess born to the purple could have filled the position better.

"Thornton chose well, if he only knew it," Hugh thought, and, mustering all his courage he at last went forward to greet the lady. And when she offered her hand to him he took it in spite of his determination not to do so, and looked into her eyes, which kindled at first

with a strange light, while in his there was an answering gleam, so that neither would have been surprised to have heard the names Milly and Hugh simultaneously spoken. But no such catastrophe occurred, and after a few commonplaces Hugh passed on and did not go near her again until, at a comparatively early hour, when he came to say good night.

Mildred had removed her glove to change the position of a ring which cut her finger, and was about putting it on again when Hugh came up, thinking that at the risk of seeming rude he would not again take the hand which had sent such a thrill through him when earlier in the evening he held it for an instant. But the sight of it, bare and white and soft as a piece of satin, unnerved him and he grasped it tightly, while he made his adieus, noting as he did so the troubled expression of her face as she looked curiously at him.

"Does she suspect I know her?" he thought as he went from the house, but not to his home.

It was a beautiful August night, and finding a seat in the shrubbery where he could not be seen, he sat there in the moonlight while one after another carriages and people on foot went past him, and finally, as the lights were being put out, Tom Leach came airily down the walk, singing softly. "Oh, don't you remember sweet Alice, Ben Bolt? Sweet Alice, with hair so brown."

"Tom's done for," Hugh thought, little dreaming how thoroughly he was done for in more respects than one.

CHAPTER XII.

LOVE VERSUS MONEY.

Tom had been the last to leave the house, for he had lingered awhile to talk to Alice, with whom he was standing in the conservatory, partially concealed by some tall vases and shrubs, when Mr. Thornton chanced that way. Thinking his guests all gone and hearing the murmur of voices, he stopped just in time to see Tom's arm around his daughter's waist and to hear a sound the meaning of which he could not mistake, as the young man's face came in close proximity to that of his daughter. To say that he was astonished is saying very little. He was horrified and disgusted, and so indignant that his first impulse was to collar the audacious Tom and hurl him through the window. But not wishing a scene before the servants, he restrained himself, and went quietly away, with much the same feeling which prompted Cæsar to say, "*Et tu, Brute!*" Since his interview with his son he had never mentioned Bessie's name to him, or raised any objection to her coming to his house as often as she liked. But he had watched her closely, and had been insensibly softened by her girlish beauty and quiet grace of manner. There was nothing of the plebeian in her appearance, and he was beginning to think that if Gerard's heart were set upon her, rather than have a bitter quarrel he might possibly consent to the marriage, although it was not at all what he desired. The young couple could live at the Park house, and in the spring

he would go abroad for an indefinite length of time, and thus separate himself and wife entirely from her family. In Europe, with her refinement and money, Alice would make a grand match and possibly marry an earl, for titles, he knew, could be bought, and he had the means to buy them. With a daughter who was My Lady, and a son-in-law who was My Lord, he could afford to have a Leach for his daughter-in-law, and Gerard's star was rising when he came so unexpectedly upon a scene which at once changed him from a relenting father into a hard, determined man, whom nothing could move.

Mildred was asleep when he went to his room, but had she been awake he would have said nothing to her. His wrath was reserved for his daughter, who poured his coffee for him next morning, as Mildred had a headache, and was not out of her bed. Gerard, too, was absent, and the meal was a very silent, cheerless one, for Alice felt that something was the matter and trembled when, after it was over, her father asked her to step into the library, as he wished to speak with her alone.

"Alice," he began, "I want to know the meaning of what I saw last night?"

"What did you see?" she asked, her heart beating rapidly but bravely as she resolved to stand by Tom.

"I am no spy on other people's actions, but I was passing the conservatory and saw Tom Leach kiss you, and I think, yes, I'm very sure you kissed him back; at all events you laid your head on his shoulder in a very disreputable way, and I want to know what it means."

Alice, who had some of her father's nature, was calm and defiant in a moment. The word disreputable had

roused her, and her answer rang out clear and distinct, "It means that Tom and I are engaged."

"Engaged! You engaged to Tom Leach!" Mr. Thornton exclaimed, putting as much contempt into his voice as it was possible to do. "Engaged to Tom Leach! Then you are no daughter of mine."

Mr. Thornton had never liked Tom, whose frank, assured manner towards him was more like that of an equal than an inferior, and for a moment he felt that he would rather see Alice dead than married to him. Just then Gerard came to the door, but was about to withdraw when his father called him in and said inquiringly, "Your sister tells me she is engaged to Tom Leach. Did you know it?"

"Yes, I imagined something of the kind," was Gerard's reply, as he crossed over to his sister and stood protectingly by her side, while his father, forgetting his softened feelings towards Bessie, went on: "And you? I gave you time to consider your choice. Have you done so?"

"I have."

"And it is ——?"

"To marry Bessie," was Gerard's answer, while Alice's came with it: "And I shall marry Tom."

Such opposition from both his children roused Mr. Thornton to fury, and his look was the look of a madman, as he said, "That is your decision. Then hear mine. I shall disinherit you both! I can't take away from you the few thousands your mother left you, but I can do as I like with my own. Now, what will you do?"

"Marry Bessie."

"Marry Tom," came simultaneously from the young

rebels, and with the words, "So be it," their father left the room, and a few minutes later they saw him galloping rapidly down the avenue in the direction of the town.

He did not return to lunch, and when he came in to dinner he seemed very absent-minded and only volunteered the remark that he was going to New York the next day to see that their house was made ready for them within a week. As Mildred's headache was unusually severe she had kept her bed the entire day and knew nothing of the trouble until just at twilight, when Alice, who felt that she must talk to some one, crept up to her, and laying her head on the pillow beside her, told of her father's anger and threat and asked if she thought he would carry it out.

"No," Mildred answered. "He will think better of it, I am sure," and Alice continued, "Not that I care for myself, but I wanted to help Tom."

"Do you love him so much that you cannot give him up?" Mildred asked.

"Love him! Why, I would rather be poor and work for my living with Tom, than have all the world without him," Alice replied, while the hand on her head pressed a little heavily as she went on: "Papa is so proud. You don't know how contemptuously he says *those Leaches*, as if they were too low for anything, and all because they happen to be poor, and because —— Did I ever tell you that Bessie's sister Mildred, who has been so long in Europe, was once,—not exactly a servant in our family, for she took care of me,—my little friend, I called her, and was very fond of her. But I suppose father does not wish Gerard and me to marry

into her family Are you crying?" Alice asked suddenly, as she heard what sounded like a sob.

"Yes,—no,—I don't know. I wish I could help you, but I can't," Mildred answered, while the tears rolled down her cheeks like rain.

Every word concerning her family and herself had been like a stab to her, and she felt how bitterly she was being punished for her deception. Once she decided to tell Alice the truth, and might have done so if she had not heard her husband's step outside the door. That broke up the conference between herself and Alice, who immediately left the room.

The next morning Mr. Thornton started for New York, where he was absent for three or four days, and when he returned he complained of a headache and pain in all parts of his body. He had taken a severe cold, he said, and went at once to his bed, which he never left again, for the cold proved to be a fever, which assumed the typhoid form, with its attendant delirium, and for two weeks Mildred watched over and cared for him with all the devotion of a true and loving wife. True she had always been, and but for one memory might have been loving, too, for Mr. Thornton had been kind and indulgent to her, and she repaid him with every possible care and attention. He always knew her in his wildest fits of delirium, and would smile when she laid her cool hand on his hot head, and sometimes whisper her name. Gerard and Alice he never knew, although he often talked of them, asking where they were, and once, during a partially lucid interval, when alone with Mildred, he said to her, "Tell the children I was very angry, but I am sorry, and I mean to make it right."

"I am sure you do," Mildred replied, little guessing what he meant, as his mind began to wander again, and he only said, "Yes,—all right, and you will see to it. All right,—all right."

And these were the last words he ever spoke, for on the fourteenth day after his return from New York, he died, with Mildred bending over him and Mildred's hand in his.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE WILL.

When Mr. Thornton left Gerard and Alice after his threat of disinheritance, he went straight to the office of Hugh McGregor, and asking to see him alone, announced his intention of making his will.

"It's time I did it," he said with a little laugh, and then as Hugh seated himself at his table, he dictated as follows :

To a few charitable institutions in New York he gave a certain sum ; to his children, Gerard and Alice, a thousand dollars each, and the rest of his property he gave unconditionally to his beloved wife, Mildred F. Thornton.

"Excuse me, Mr. Thornton," Hugh said, looking up curiously from the paper on which he was writing, "isn't this a strange thing you are doing, giving everything to your wife, and nothing to your children. Does she know,—does she desire it ?"

"She knows nothing, but I do. I know my own busi-

ness. Please go on. Write what I tell you," Mr. Thornton answered impatiently, and without further protest Hugh wrote the will, which was to make Mildred the richest woman in the county, his hand trembling a little as he wrote Mildred F., and thought to himself, "That is Milly's name. She did not deceive him there. Does he know the rest?"

"You must have three witnesses," he said, when the legal instrument was drawn up.

"Tom Leach is in the next room. I saw him. He will do for one," Mr. Thornton said, with a grim smile, as he thought what a ghastly joke it would be for Tom to witness a will which cut Alice off with a mere pittance. "Have him in."

So Tom was called, together with another man who had just entered the office. A stiff bow was Mr. Thornton's only greeting to Tom, who listened while the usual formula was gone through with, and then signing his name, Thomas J. Leach, went back to his books, with no suspicion as to what the will contained or how it would affect him.

"I will keep the paper myself," Mr. Thornton said, taking it from Hugh, with some shadowy idea in his brain that it might be well to have it handy in case he changed his mind and wished to destroy it.

But death came too soon for that, and when he died his will was lying among his papers in his private drawer, where it was found by Gerard, who without opening it, carried it to Mildred. There had been a funeral befitting Mr. Thornton's position and wealth, and he had been taken to Greenwood and laid beside his first wife, and after a few days spent in New York the family came back to their country home, which they

preferred to the city. Bessie, Tom and Hugh met them at the station, the heart of the latter beating rapidly when he saw Mildred in her widow's weeds, and helping her alight from the train, he went with her to her carriage, and telling her he should call in a few days on business, bowed a little stiffly and walked away.

Since drawing the will he had been growing very hard towards Mildred, whose identity he did not believe her husband knew, else he had not married her, and as he went back to his office after meeting her at the station he wondered what Gerard would think of the will, half hoping he would contest it, and wondering how long before something would be said of it to him. It was not long, for the second day after his return from New York, Gerard found it and took it to Mildred.

"Father's will," he said, with a sinking sensation, as if he already saw the shadow on his life.

Mildred took the paper rather indifferently, but her face blanched as she read it, and her words came slowly and thick as she said, "Oh, Gerard, I am so sorry, but he did not mean it to stand, and it shall not. Read it."

Taking it from her, Gerard read with a face almost as white as hers, but with a different expression upon it. She was sorry and astonished, while he was resentful and angry at the man whose dead hand was striking him so hard. But he was too proud to show what he really felt, and said composedly, "I am not surprised. He threatened to disinherit us unless we gave up Bessie and Tom, and he has done so. It's all right. I have something from mother and I shall be as glad to work for Bessie as Tom will be to work for Alice. It's not the money I care for so much as the feeling which

prompted the act, and, by George," he continued, as he glanced for the first time at the signatures, Henry Boyd, Thomas J. Leach, Hugh McGregor, "if he didn't get Tom to sign Alice's death warrant. That is the meanest of all."

What more he would have said was cut short by the violent fit of hysterics into which Mildred went for the first time in her life. And she did not come out of it easily either, but sobbed and cried convulsively all the morning, and in the afternoon kept her room, seeing no one but Alice, who clung to her as fondly as if she had been her own mother. Alice had heard of the will with a good deal of composure, for she was just the age and temperament to think that a life of poverty, if shared with the man she loved, was not so very hard, and besides she had in her own right seven hundred dollars a year, which was something, she reasoned, and she took her loss quite philosophically, and tried to comfort Mildred, whose distress she could not understand. Mildred knew by the handwriting that Hugh had drawn the will, and after passing a sleepless night she arose early the next morning, weak in body but strong in her resolve to right the wrong which had been done to Gerard and Alice.

"I am going to see Mr. McGregor," she said to them when breakfast was over, and an hour or two later her carriage was brought out, and the coachman ordered to drive her to Hugh's office and leave her there.

CHAPTER XIV.

MILDRED AND HUGH.

Tom was at work that morning on the farm, and as the other clerk was taking a holiday, Hugh was alone when he received his visitor, whose appearance there surprised him, and at whom he looked curiously, her face was so white and her eyes, swollen with weeping, so unnaturally large and bright. But she was very calm, and taking the seat he offered, and throwing back the heavy veil whose length swept the floor as she sat, she began at once by saying :

"You drew my husband's will ?"

"Yes, I drew it," he answered curtly, and not at all prepared for her next question, which seemed to arraign him as a culprit.

"Why did you do it ?" and there was a ring in her voice he could not understand.

"Why did I do it ?" he repeated. "Don't you know that lawyers usually follow their client's wishes in making their wills ?"

"Yes, but you might have dissuaded him from it. You knew it was wrong."

"You don't like it then ?" he asked, but repented the question when he saw the effect upon her.

Rising to her feet and tugging at her bonnet strings as if they choked her, she looked steadily at him and said :

"Don't like it ? What do you take me for ? No, I

don't like it, and if I had found it first, I think,—I am sure I should have torn it to pieces."

She had her bonnet off, and was tossing it toward the table as if its weight oppressed her. But it fell upon the floor, where it might have lain if Hugh had not picked it up, carefully and gingerly, as if half afraid of this mass of crape. But it was Milly's bonnet, and he brushed a bit of dust from the veil, and held it in his hand, while she pushed back her hair from her forehead, and wiping away the drops of perspiration standing there went on :

"Do you know why he made such a will?"

"I confess I do not. I expressed my surprise at the time, but he was not a man to be turned from his purpose when once his mind was made up. May *I* ask why he did it?" Hugh said, and Mildred replied :

"Yes ;—he was angry with Gerard and Alice, because of—of—Tom and Bessie Leach. The young people are engaged and he accidentally found it out."

"Yes, I see ;—he thought a Thornton too good to marry a Leach. Do you share his opinion?" Hugh asked, while the blood came surging back to Mildred's white face in a great red wave, but left it again, except in two round spots which burned on either cheek.

Hugh was torturing her cruelly, and she wrung her hands, but did not answer his question directly. She only said, as she took the will from her pocket and held it towards him, "It is all right? It is legally executed?"

"Yes, it is all right."

"And it gives everything to me to do with as I please?"

"Yes, it gives everything to you to do with as you

please. You are a very rich woman, Mrs. Thornton, and I congratulate you."

His tone was sarcastic in the extreme, and stung Mildred so deeply that she forgot herself, and going a step nearer to him cried out, "Oh, Hugh, why are you so hard upon me? Why do you hate me so? Don't you know who I am?"

Hugh had not expected this, for he had no idea that Mildred would ever tell who she was, and the sound of his name, spoken as she used to speak it when excited, moved him strangely. He was still holding her black bonnet, the long veil of which had become twisted around his boot, and without answering her at once he stooped to unwind it and then put the bonnet from him upon the table as if it had been a barrier between him and the woman, whose eyes were upon him.

"Yes," he said at last, very slowly, for he was afraid his voice might tremble, "You are Mrs. Thornton now; but you were Mildred Leach."

"Oh, Hugh, I am so glad!" Mildred cried, as she sank into her chair, and covering her face with her hands, sobbed like a child, while Hugh stood looking at her, wondering what he ought to do, or say, and wishing she would speak first. But she did not, and at last he said:

"Mrs. Thornton, you have often puzzled me with a likeness to somebody seen before I met you. But I had no suspicion of the truth until I saw you in the cemetery at your father's grave. I am no eavesdropper, but was so placed that I had to see and hear, and I knew then that you were Mildred, come back to us, not as we hoped you would come, but ——"

His voice was getting shaky, and he stopped a

moment to recover himself. Then, taking from his side pocket the handkerchief he had carried with him since the night he found it, he passed it to her, saying :

"I picked it up after you left the yard. Have you missed it ?"

"Yes,—no. I don't remember," she replied, taking the handkerchief, and drying her eyes with it. Then, looking up at Hugh, while the first smile she had known since her husband died broke over her face, she continued : "I am glad you know me ; I have wanted to tell you and mother and everybody. The deception was terrible to me, but I had promised and must keep my word."

"Then Mr. Thornton knew ? You did not deceive him ?" Hugh asked, conscious of a great revulsion of feeling towards the woman he had believed so steeped in hypocrisy.

"Deceive him ?" Mildred said, in some surprise. "Never,—in any single thing. I am innocent there. Let me explain how it happened, and you will tell the others, for I can never do it but once. I am so tired. You don't know how tired," and she put her hands to her face, which was white as marble, as she commenced the story which the reader already knows, telling it rapidly, blaming herself more than she deserved and softening as much as possible her husband's share in the matter.

"He was very proud, you know," she said, "and the Leaches were like the ground beneath his feet. But he loved me. I am sure of that, and he was always kind and good, and tried to make up for the burden he had imposed upon me. Yes, my husband loved me, knowing I was a Leach."

"And you loved him?" Hugh asked, regretting the words the moment they had passed his lips, and regretting them more when he saw their effect upon Mildred.

Drawing herself up, she replied :

"Whether I loved him or not does not matter to you, or any one else. He was my husband, and I did my duty by him, and he was satisfied. If I could have forgotten I should have been happy, and I tell you truly I am sorry he is dead, and if I could I'd bring him back to-day."

She was now putting on the bonnet which made her a widow again, and made her face so deathly white that Hugh was frightened and said to her :

"Forgive me, Mrs. Thornton. It was rude in me to ask that question. Forget it, I beg of you. You are very pale. Can I do anything for you?"

"No," she answered, faintly. "I am only tired, that's all, and I must get this business settled before I can rest. I have come to give the money back to Gerard and Alice, and you must help me do it."

"I don't quite understand you," Hugh said. "Do you mean to give away the fortune your husband left you?"

"Yes, every farthing of it. I can never use it. It would not be right for me to keep it. He was angry when he made that will. He did not mean it, and had he lived he would have changed it. That was what troubled him when he was ill and he tried to tell me about it," and very briefly she repeated what her husband had said to her of his children.

"I did not understand him then, but I do now. He knew I would do right ; he trusted me," she continued, her tears falling so fast as almost to choke her utterance.

"But," said Hugh, "why give it all? If Mr. Thornton had made his will under different conditions, he would have remembered you. Why not divide equally? Why leave yourself penniless?"

"I shall not be penniless," Mildred replied. "When I was married Mr. Thornton gave me fifteen thousand dollars for my own. This I shall keep. It will support mother and me, for I am going back to her as soon as all is known. And you will help me? You will tell mother and Bessie and Tom, and everybody, and you will be my friend, just for a little while, for the sake of the days when we played together?"

Her lips were quivering and her eyes were full of tears as she made this appeal, which no man could have withstood, much less Hugh, who would have faced the cannon's mouth for her then, so great was his sympathy for her.

"Yes, I will do all you wish, but not to-day. The will must be proved first, and you are too tired. I will see to it at once, and then if you still are of the same mind as now I am at your service. Perhaps it will be better to say nothing for a few days."

"Yes, better so,—you—know—best—stand—by—me, —Hugh," Mildred said, very slowly, as she leaned back in her chair and closed her eyes in the weary way of a child going to sleep.

Hugh thought she was going to faint, her face was so pinched and gray, and he said, excitedly:

"Mildred, Mildred, rouse yourself. You must not faint here. I don't know what to do with people who faint. You must go home at once. Your carriage is gone but I see a cab coming. I will call it for you."

Darting to the door, he signaled the cab, to which he

half led, half carried Mildred, who seemed very weak and was shaking with cold. Rallying a little, she said to him :

"Thank you, Hugh. I'd better go home. I am getting worse very fast and everything is black. Is it growing dark ?"

This was alarming. He could not let her go alone, and springing in beside her, Hugh bade the cabman drive with all possible speed to the Park and then go for a physician.

CHAPTER XV.

THE DENOUEMENT.

NOTHING could have happened better for Mildred and her cause than the long and dangerous illness which followed that visit to Hugh's office. It was early September then, but the cold November rain was beating against the windows of her room when at last she was able to sit up and carry out her purpose. She had been very ill, first with the fever taken from her husband, and then with nervous prostration, harder to bear than the fever, for then she had known nothing of what was passing around her, or whose were the voices speaking so lovingly to her, or whose the hands ministering to her so tenderly, Bessie, who called her sister, and Alice, who was scarcely less anxious and attentive than Bessie herself. She did not even know the white-haired woman who sat by her day after day, with her blind

eyes turned toward the tossing, moaning, babbling figure on the bed, whose talk was always of the past, when she was a girl and lived at home, and bathed her mother's head and cooked the dinner and scolded Tom and Bessie and kissed and petted Charlie. Of Hugh she seldom spoke, and when she did it was in the old, teasing way, calling him a red-haired Scotchman and laughing at his big hands and feet. To all intents and purposes she was the Mildred whom we first saw shelling peas in the doorway, and the names of her husband and Gerard and Alice never passed her lips. Every morning and evening Hugh walked up the avenue, and ringing the bell asked, "How is Mrs. Thornton?" Then he would walk back again with an abstracted look upon his face, which to a close observer would have told of the fear tugging at his heart. The possibility that Mildred could ever be anything to him, if she lived, did not once enter his mind, but he did not want her to die, and the man who had seldom prayed before, now learned to pray earnestly for Mildred's life, as many others were doing.

Hugh had done his work well, and told Mildred's story, first to her mother, Bessie and Tom, then to Gerard and Alice, and then to everybody, giving it, however, a different coloring from what Mildred had done. She had softened her husband's part in the matter and magnified her own, while he passed very lightly over hers, and dwelt at length upon the pride and arrogance of the man who, to keep her family aloof, wrung from her a promise, given unguardedly and repented of so bitterly. Thus the sympathy of the people was all with Mildred, who, as the lady of Thornton Park, had won their good opinion by her kindness and gentleness, and

gracious, familiar manner. That she was Mrs. Giles Thornton did not harm her at all, for money and position are a mighty power, and the interest in, and sympathy for her were quite as great, if not greater, than would have been the case if it were plain Mildred Leach for whom each Sunday prayers were said in the churches and for whom inquiries were made each day until the glad news went through the town that the crisis was past and she would live. Hugh was alone in his office when the little boy who brought him the morning paper said, as he threw it in, "Mis' Thornton's better. She knows her marm, and the doctor says she'll git well." Then he passed on, leaving Hugh alone with the good news.

"Thank God,—thank God," he said. "I couldn't let Milly die," and when a few minutes later one of his clerks came into the front office, he heard his chief in the next room whistling Annie Laurie, and said to himself, with a little nod, "I guess she's better."

It had been a very difficult task to tell Mildred's story to Mrs. Leach and Tom and Bessie, but Hugh had done it so well that the shock was not as great as he had feared it might be. As was natural, Mrs. Leach was the most affected of the three, and within an hour was at Mildred's bedside, calling her Milly and daughter and kissing the hot lips which gave back no answering sign, for Mildred never knew her, nor any one, until a morning in October, when, waking suddenly from a long, refreshing sleep, she looked curiously about her, and saw the blind woman sitting just where she had sat for days and days and would have sat for nights had she been permitted to do so. Now she was partially asleep, but the words "Mother, are you here?"

roused her, and in an instant Mildred was in her mother's arms, begging for the pardon which was not long withheld.

"Oh, Milly, my child, how could you see me blind and not tell me who you were?" were the only words of reproof the mother ever uttered; then all was joy and peace, and Mildred's face shone with the light of a great gladness, when Tom and Bessie came in to see her, both very kind and both a little constrained in their manner towards her, for neither could make it quite seem as if she were their sister.

Gerard and Alice took it more naturally, and after a few days matters adjusted themselves, and as no word was said of the past Mildred began to recover her strength, which, however, came back slowly, so that it was November before she was able to see Hugh in her boudoir, where Tom carried her in his arms, saying, as he put her down in her easy chair, "Are you sure you are strong enough for it?"

"Yes," she answered, eagerly. "I can't put it off any longer. I shall never rest until it is done. Tell Hugh I am ready."

Tom had only a vague idea of what she wished to do, but knew that it had some connection with her husband's will, the nature of which he had been told by Gerard.

"She'll never let that stand a minute after she gets well," Tom had said, but he never guessed that she meant to give up the whole.

Hugh, who had been sent for that morning, came at once, and found himself trembling in every nerve as he followed Tom to the room where Mildred was waiting for him. He had not seen her during her sickness, and he was not prepared to find her so white and thin and

still so exquisitely lovely as she looked with her eyes so large and bright, and the smile of welcome on her face as she gave him her hand and said, "We must finish that business now, and then I can get well. Suppose I had died, and the money had gone from Gerard and Alice."

"I think it would have come back to them all the same," Hugh replied, sitting down beside her, and wondering why the sight of her affected him so strangely.

But she did not give him much time to think, and plunging at once into business, told him that she wished to give everything to Gerard and Alice, dividing it equally between them.

"You know exactly what my husband had and where it was invested," she said, "and you must divide it to the best of your ability, giving to each an equal share in the Park, for I think they will both live here. I wish them to do it, for then we shall all be near each other. I shall live with mother and try to atone for the wrong I have done. I have enough to keep us in comfort, and shall not take a cent of what was left me in the will."

This was her decision, from which nothing could move her, and when at last Hugh left her she had signed away over a million of dollars and felt the richer for it, nor could Gerard and Alice induce her to take back any part of it after they were told what she had done.

"Don't worry me," she said to them. "It seemed to me a kind of atonement to do it, and I am so happy, and I am sure your father would approve of it if he could know about it."

After that Mildred's recovery was rapid, and on the

first day of the new year she went back to the farm-house to live, notwithstanding the earnest entreaties of Gerard and Alice that she should stay with them until Tom and Bessie came, for it was decided that the four should, for a time at least, live together at the Park. But Mildred was firm.

"Mother needs me," she said, "and is happier when I am with her. I can see that she is failing. I shall not have her long, and while she lives I shall try to make up to her for all the selfish years when I was away, seeking my own pleasure and forgetting hers."

And Mildred kept her word and was everything to her mother, who lived to see, or rather hear, the double wedding, which took place at St. Jude's one morning in September, little more than a year after Mr. Thornton's death. The church was full and there was scarcely a dry eye in it as Mildred led her blind mother up the aisle, and laid her hand upon Bessie's arm in response to the question, "Who giveth this woman to be married to this man?" It was Mildred who gave Alice away, and who three weeks later received the young people when they came home from their wedding journey, seeming and looking much like her old self as she did the honors of the house where she had once been mistress, and joining heartily in their happiness, laughingly returned Tom's badinage when he called her his stepmother-in-law. Then, when the festivities were over, she went back to her mother, whom she cared for so tenderly that her life was prolonged for more than a year, and the chimes in the old church belfry were ringing for a Saviour born, when she at last died in Mildred's arms, with Mildred's name upon her lips and a blessing for the beloved daughter who had been so much to her,

The night before she died Mildred was alone with her for several hours, and bending over her she said, "I want to hear you say again that you forgive me for the waywardness which kept me from you so long, and my deception when I came back. I am so sorry, mother."

"Forgive you?" her mother said, her blind eyes trying to pierce the darkness and look into the face so close to hers. "I have nothing to forgive. I understand it all, and since you came back to me you have been the dearest child a mother ever had. Don't cry so, Milly," and the shaky hand wiped away the tears which fell so fast, as Mildred went on:

"I don't know whether the saints at rest ever think of those they have left behind; but if they do, and father asks for me, tell him how sorry I am, and tell Charlie how I loved him, and how much I meant to do for him when I went away."

"I'll tell them. Don't cry," came faintly from the dying woman, who said but little more until the dawn was breaking, and she heard in the distance the sound of the chimes ringing in the Christmas morn. Then, lifting her head from Mildred's arm, she cried joyfully:

"The bells,—the bells,—the Christmas bells. I am glad to go on his birthday. Good-bye, Milly. God bless you; don't cry."

They buried her by her husband and Charlie, and then Mildred was all alone, except for the one servant she kept. Bessie and Alice would gladly have had her at the Park, but she resisted all their entreaties and gave no sign of the terrible loneliness which oppressed her as day after day she lived her solitary life, which, for the first week or two, was seldom enlivened by the

presence of any one except Gerard and Tom, who each day plowed their way through the heavy drifts of snow which were piled high above the fence tops. A terrible storm was raging on the mountains, and Rocky Point felt it in all its fury. The trains were stopped,—the roads were blocked,—communication between neighbor and neighbor was cut off, and though many would gladly have done so, few could visit the lonely woman, who sat all day where she could look out toward the graves on which she knew the snow was drifting, and who at night sat motionless by the fire, living over the past and shrinking from the future which lay so drearily before her.

CHAPTER XVI.

SUNSHINE AFTER THE STORM.

It was the last day, or rather the last night of the storm. The wind had subsided, and when the sun went down there was in the west a tinge of red as a promise of a fair to-morrow. But to Mildred there seemed no to-morrow better than to-day had been, and when after her early tea she sat down in her little sitting-room, there came over her such a sense of dreariness and pain as she had never before experienced. Once she thought of her husband, who had been so kind to her, and whispered sadly :

"I might have learned to love him, but he is dead and gone ; everybody is gone who cared for me. Even

Hugh has disappointed me," and although she did not realize it this thought was perhaps the saddest of all. Hugh had disappointed her. During the two years since her return to the farm house, she had seen but little of him, for it was seldom that he called, and when he did it was upon her mother, not herself.

But he had not forgotten her, and there was scarcely a waking hour of his life that she was not in his mind, and often when he was busiest with his clients, who were increasing rapidly, he saw in the papers he was drawing up for them, her face as it had looked at him when she said :

"Oh, Hugh, don't you know me?" He was angry with her then, and his heart was full of bitterness towards her for her deception. But that was gone long ago, and he was only biding his time to speak.

"While her mother lives she will not leave her," he said ; but her mother was dead, and he could wait no longer. "I must be decent, and not go the very first day after the funeral," he thought, a little glad of the storm which kept every one indoors.

But it was over now, and wrapping his overcoat around him, and pulling his fur cap over his ears he went striding through the snow to the farm house, which he reached just as Mildred was so absorbed in her thoughts that she did not hear the door opened by her maid, or know that he was there until he came into the room and was standing upon the hearth rug before her. Then, with the cry, "Oh, Hugh, is it you? I am glad you have come. It is so lonesome," she sprang up and offered him her hand, while he looked at her with a feeling of regret that he had not come before. He did not sit down beside her, but opposite, where he

could see her as they talked on indifferent subjects,—the storm,—the trains delayed,—the wires down,—the damage done in town,—and the prospect of a fair day to-morrow. Then there was silence between them and Mildred got up and raked the fire in the grate and brushed the hearth with a little broom in the corner, while Hugh watched her, and when she was through took the poker himself and attacked the fire, which was doing very well.

"I like to poke the fire," he said, while Mildred replied, "So do I;" and then there was silence again, until Hugh burst out:

"I say, Milly, how much longer am I to wait?"

"Wha—at?" Mildred replied, a faint flush tinging her face.

"How much longer am I to wait?" he repeated, and she answered, "Wait for what?"

"For you," and Hugh arose and went and stood over her as he continued: "Do you know how old I am?"

Her face was scarlet now, but she answered laughingly, "I am thirty. You used to be four years older than myself, which makes you thirty-four."

"Yes," he said. "As time goes I am thirty-four, but measured by my feelings it is a hundred years since that morning when I saw you going through the Park gate and felt that I had lost you, as I knew I had afterwards, and never more so than when I saw you in the cemetery and knew who you were."

"Why are you reminding me of all this? Don't you know how it hurts? I know you despised me then, and must despise me now," Mildred said, with anguish in her tones as she, too, rose from her chair and stood apart from him.

"I did despise you then, it's true," Hugh replied, "and tried to think I hated you, not so much for deceiving us as for deceiving your husband, as I believed you must have done; but I know better now. Your record has not been stainless, Milly, and I would rather have you as you were seventeen years ago on the summer morning when you were a little girl of thirteen shelling peas and prophesying that you would one day be the mistress of Thornton Park. You have been its mistress, and I am sorry for that, but nothing can kill my love, which commenced in my boyhood, when you made fun of my hands and feet and brogue and called me freckled and awkward, and then atoned for it all by some look in your bright eyes which said you did not mean it. I am awkward still, but the frecks and the brogue are gone, and I have come to ask you to be my wife,—not to-morrow, but some time next spring, when everything is beginning new. Will you, Milly? I will try and make you happy, even if I have but little money.

"Oh, Hugh! What do I care for money. I hate it!"

It was the old Mildred who spoke in the old familiar words, which Hugh remembered so well, but it was the new Mildred who, when he held his arms towards her, saying "Come," went gladly into them, as a tired child goes to its mother.

It was late that night when Hugh left his promised bride, for there was much to talk about, and all the incidents of their childhood to be lived over again, Hugh telling of the lock of hair and the pea-pod he had kept with the peas, hard as bullets now, especially the smaller one, which he called Mildred,

"But, do you know, I really think it has recently begun to change," Hugh said, "and I shall not be surprised to find it soft again ——"

"Just as I am to let you see how much I love you," Mildred said, as she laid her beautiful head upon his arm, and told him of the rumor of his engagement to Bessie, which had been the means of making her Mrs. Thornton.

"That was the only secret I had from my husband," she said. "I told him everything else, and he took me knowing it all, and I believe he loved me, too. He was very kind to me,—and ——"

She meant to be loyal to her husband, and would have said more, if Hugh had not stopped her mouth in a most effective way. No man cares to hear the woman who has just promised to marry him talk about her dead husband, and Hugh was not an exception.

"Yes, darling, I know," he said. "But let's bury the past. You are mine now; all mine."

Hugh might be awkward and shy in many things, but he was not at all shy or awkward in love-making when once the ice was broken. He had waited for Mildred seventeen years, and he meant to make the most of her now, and he stayed so long that she at last bade him go, and pointed to the clock just striking the hour of midnight.

No one seemed surprised when told of the engagement. It was what everybody expected, and what should have been long ago, and what would have been, if Mildred had staid at home, instead of going off to Europe. Congratulations came from every quarter and none were more sincere than those from the young

people at the Park, who wanted to make a grand wedding. To this Hugh did not object, for in his heart was the shadow of a wish to see Mildred again as he saw her that night at the party in jewels and satins and lace. But she vetoed it at once. A widow had no business with orange blossoms, she said, and besides that she was too old, and Hugh was old, too, and she should be married quietly in church, in a plain gray traveling dress and bonnet. And she was married thus on a lovely morning in June, when the roses were in full bloom, and the church was full of flowers, and people, too,—for everybody was there to see the bride, who went in Mildred Thornton and came out Mildred McGregor.

And now there is little more to tell. It is three years since that wedding day, and Hugh and Mildred live in the red farm house, which is scarcely a farm house now, it has been so enlarged and changed, with its pointed roofs and bow windows and balconies. Brook Cottage they call it, and across the brook in the rear there is a rustic bridge leading to the meadow, where Mr. Leach's cows used to feed, but which now is a garden, or pleasure ground, not so large, but quite as pretty as the Park, and every fine afternoon at the hour when Hugh is expected from his office, Mildred walks through the grounds, leading by the hand a little golden-haired boy, whom she calls Charlie for the baby brother who died and whom he greatly resembles. And when at last Hugh comes, the three go back together, Hugh's arm around Milly's waist and his boy upon his shoulder. They are not rich and never will be, but they are very happy in each other's love, and no shadow, however small, ever rests on Milly's still lovely face, save when

she recalls the mad ambition and discontent which came so near wrecking her life.

In the Park three children play, Giles and Fanny, who belong to the Thorntons, and a second Mildred Leach, who belongs to Tom and Alice.

One picture more, and then we leave them forever near the spot where we first saw them. Gerard and Bessie,—Alice and Tom,—have come to the cottage at the close of a warm July afternoon, and are grouped around the door, where Mildred sits, with the sunlight falling on her hair, a bunch of sweet peas pinned upon her bosom, and the light of a great joy in her eyes as she watches Hugh swinging the four children in a hammock, and says to Bessie "I never thought I could be as happy as I am now. God has been very good to me."

THE END.

MRS. MARY J. HOLMES' NOVELS.

Over a MILLION Sold.

As a writer of domestic stories, which are extremely interesting, Mrs. Mary Holmes is unrivalled. Her characters are true to life, quaint, and admirable.

Tempest and Sunshine.	Daisy Thornton.	Edna Browning.
English Orphans.	Chateau D'Or.	West Lawn.
Homestead on the Hillside.	Queenie Hetherton.	Mildred.
'Lena Rivers.	Darkness and Daylight.	Forrest House.
Meadow Brook.	Hugh Worthington.	Madeline.
Dora Deane.	Cameron Pride.	Christmas Stories.
Cousin Maude.	Rose Mather.	Bessie's Fortune.
Marian Grey.	Ethelyn's Mistake.	Gretchen.
Edith Lyle.	Millbank.	Marguerite.
Dr. Hathern's Daughters.	(*New.*)	

Price $1.50 per Vol.

AUGUSTA J. EVANS'

MAGNIFICENT NOVELS.

Beulah, $1.75	Inez, $1.75	Vashti, $2.00
St. Elmo, $2.00	Macaria, $1.75	Infelice, $2.00

At the Mercy of Tiberius (*New*), $2.00.

"The author's style is beautiful, chaste, and elegant. Her ideas are clothed in the most fascinating imagery, and her power of delineating character is truly remarkable."

MARION HARLAND'S

SPLENDID NOVELS.

Alone.	Miriam.	My Little Love.	Helen Gardner.
Hidden Path.	Sunny Bank.	Phemie's Temptation.	Husbands and Homes.
Moss Side.	Ruby's Husband.	The Empty Heart.	Jessamine.
Nemesis.	At Last.	From My Youth Up.	True as Steel.

Price $1.50 per Vol.

"Marion Harland understands the art of constructing a plot which will gain the attention of the reader at the beginning, and keep up the interest to the last page."

MAY AGNES FLEMING'S

POPULAR NOVELS.

Silent and True.	Kate Danton.	A Changed Heart.
A Wonderful Woman	Guy Earlscourt's Wife.	Pride and Passion.
A Terrible Secret.	Heir of Charlton.	Sharing Her Crime.
Norine's Revenge.	Carried by Storm.	A Wronged Wife.
A Mad Marriage.	Lost for a Woman.	Maude Percy's Secret.
One Night's Mystery.	A Wife's Tragedy.	The Actress' Daughter.

The Queen of the Isle. The Midnight Queen. (*New.*)

Price $1.50 per Vol.

"Mrs. Fleming's stories are growing more and more popular every day. Their life-like conversations, flashes of wit, constantly varying scenes and deeply interesting plots, combine to place their author in the very first rank of Modern Novelists."

All the books on this list are handsomely printed and bound in cloth, sold everywhere, and by mail, postage free, on receipt of price by

G. W. DILLINGHAM, PUBLISHER,

33 West 23d Street, New York.

JULIE P. SMITH'S NOVELS.

Widow Goldsmith's Daughter	$1 50	The Widower	$1 50
Chris and Otho	1 50	The Married Belle	1 50
Ten Old Maids	1 50	Courting and Farming	50
Lucy	1 50	Kiss and be Friends	50
His Young Wife	1 50	Blossom Bud	1 50

JOHN ESTEN COOKE'S WORKS.

Surry of Eagle's Nest	$1 50	Hammer and Rapier	$1 50
Fairfax	1 50	Mohun	1 50
Hilt to Hilt	1 50	Captain Ralph	1 50
Beatrice Hallam	1 50	Col. Ross of Piedmont	1 50
Leather and Silk	1 50	Robert E. Lee	1 50
Miss Bonnybel	1 50	Stonewall Jackson	1 50
Out of the Foam	1 50	Her Majesty the Queen	1 50

CELIA E. GARDNER'S NOVELS.

Stolen Waters. (In verse)	$1 50	Rich Medway	$1 50
Broken Dreams. Do.	1 50	A Woman's Wiles	1 50
Compensation. Do.	1 50	Terrace Roses	1 50
A Twisted Skein. Do.	1 50	Seraph—or Mortal? (New)	1 50
Tested	1 50		

A. S. ROE'S NOVELS.

True to the Last	$1 50	To Love and Be Loved	$1 50
A Long Look Ahead	1 50	Time and Tide	1 50
The Star and the Cloud	1 50	Woman Our Angel	1 50
I've Been Thinking	1 50	Looking Around	1 50
How could He Help It	1 50	The Cloud on the Heart	1 50
Like and Unlike	1 50	Resolution	1 50

CAPTAIN MAYNE REID'S WORKS.

The Scalp Hunters	$1 50	The White Chief	$1 50
The Rifle Rangers	1 50	The Tiger Hunter	1 50
The War Trail	1 50	The Hunter's Feast	1 50
The Wood Rangers	1 50	Wild Life	1 50
The Wild Huntress	1 50	Osceola, the Seminole	1 50
The Maroon	1 50	The Quadroon	1 50
The Headless Horseman	1 50	The White Gauntlet	1 50
The Rangers and Regulators	1 50	Lost Leonore	1 50

POPULAR HAND-BOOKS.

The Habits of Good Society—The nice points of taste and good manners	$1 00
The Art of Conversation—For those who wish to be agreeable talkers	1 00
The Arts of Writing, Reading and Speaking—For Self-Improvement	1 00
Carelton's Hand-Book of Popular Quotations	1 50
1000 Legal Don'ts—By Ingersoll Lockwood	75
600 Medical Don'ts—By Herd. C. Valentine, M.D	75
On the Chafing Dish—By Harriet P. Bailey	50
Pole on Whist	1 00
Draw Poker without a Master	50

POPULAR NOVELS, COMIC BOOKS, ETC.

Les Miserables—Translated from the French. The only complete edition	$1 50
Stephen Lawrence—By Annie Edwardes	1 50
Susan Fielding Do. Do.	1 50
A Woman of Fashion Do. Do.	1 50
Archie Lovell Do. Do.	1 50
Love (L'Amour)—English Translation from Michelet's famous French work	1 50
Woman (La Femme)—The Sequel to "L'Amour." Do. Do.	1 50
Verdant Green—A racy English college story. With 200 comic illustrations	1 50
Doctor Antonio—By Ruffini	1 50
Beatrice Cenci—From the Italian	1 50
Josh Billings His Complete Writings—With Biography, Steel Portrait, and 100 Ill.	2 00
Artemas Ward. Complete Comic Writings—With Biography, Portrait, and 50 Ill.	1 50
Children's Fairy Geography—With hundreds of beautiful Illustrations	1 00

All the books on this list are handsomely printed and bound in cloth, sold everywhere, and by mail, postage free, on receipt of price by

G. W. DILLINGHAM, Publisher,
33 WEST 23d STREET, NEW YORK.

589643
F. of C

Miscellaneous Works.

Out of India—Rudyard Kipling..$1 50
The King of Alberia- By L. D.. 1 50
Fort Reno—By Mrs. D. B. Dyer.. 1 00
Lady Olivia—By Col. Falkner.... 1 00
White Rose of Memphis Do... 1 00
Red Rose of Savannah—A. S. M 1 00
The Pink Rose of Mexico. Do. 1 00
Yellow Rose of New Orleans. " 1 00
It's a Way Love Has..... 25
Zarailla—By Beulah..... 50
Florine..... 50
Smart Sayings of Children—Paul 1 00
Crazy History of the U. S..... 50
Rocks and Shoals—Swisher..... 50
The Wages of Sin..... 50
Idwymon—By Fred'k A. Randle.. 1 50
The Disagreeable Man—A. S. M. 75
Our Artist in Spain, etc.—Carleton 1 00
Dawn to Noon—By Violet Fane. 1 50
Constance's Fate. Do . 1 50
Missing Chord—Lucy Dillingham 1 25
Ronbar—By R. S. Dement..... 1 50
A Manless World—Yourell..... 75
Journey to Mars—Pope..... 1 50
The Dissolution—Dandelyon.... 1 00
Lion Jack—By P. T. Barnum..... 1 50
Jack in the Jungle. Do. 1 50
Dick Broadhead. Do. 1 50
Red Birds Christmas Story, Holmes 1 00
Flashes from "Ouida"..... 1 25
Private Letters of a French Woman 75
Passion's Dream—W. Boyd Sample 75
The Arrows of Love—L. Daintrey 75
Eighty-Seven Kisses—By?..... 75
Treasury of Knowledge..... 1 00
Mrs. Spriggins—Widow Bedott... 25
Phemie Frost—Ann S. Stephens.. 1 50
Disagreeable Woman—Starr.... 75
The Story of a Day in London.. 25
Lone Ranch—By Mayne Reid.... 1 50
The Train Boy—Horatio Alger.... 1 25
Dan, The Detective—Alger..... 1 25
Death Blow to Spiritualism.... 50
The Sale of Mrs. Adral—Costello 50
The New Adam and Eve—Todd. 50
Bottom Facts in Spiritualism.. 1 50
The Mystery of Central Park—Bly 50
Debatable Land—R. Dale Owen. 2 00
Threading My Way. Do. . 1 50
Princess Nourmahal—Geo. Sand 1 50
Galgano's Wooing—Stebbins.... 1 25
Stories about Doctors—Jeffreson 1 50
Stories about Lawyers Do. 1 50
Doctor Antonio—By Ruffini..... 1 50
Beatrice Cenci—From the Italian. 1 50
The Story of Mary..... 1 50
Madame—By Frank Lee Benedict 1 50
A Late Remorse. Do 1 50
Hammer and Anvil. Do. 1 50
Her Friend Laurence. Do. 1 50
L'Assommoir—Zola's great novel. 1 00

Mignonnette—By Sangrée.. ....$1 00
Jessica—By Mrs. W. H. White.... 1 50
Women of To-day. Do. 1 50
The Baroness—Joaquin Miller... 1 50
One Fair Woman. Do. ... 1 50
The Burnhams—Mrs. G. E. Stewart 2 00
Eugene Ridgewood—Paul James 1 50
Braxton's Bar—R. M. Daggett... 1 50
Miss Beck—By Tilbury Holt... . 1 50
A Wayward Life..... 1 00
Winning Winds—Emerson..... 1 50
The Fallen Pillar Saint—Best... 1 25
An Errand Girl—Johnson..... 1 50
Ask Her, Man! Ask Her!..... 1 50
Hidden Power—T. H. Tibbles.... 1 50
Parson Thorne—E. M. Buckingham 1 50
Errors—By Ruth Carter 1 50
The Abbess of Jouarre—Renan.. 1 00
Bulwer's Letters to His Wife.. 2 00
Sense—A serious book. Pomeroy. 1 50
Gold Dust..... Do. 1 50
Our Saturday Nights.. Do. 1 50
Nonsense—A comic book Do. 1 50
Brick Dust. Do. Do. 1 50
Home Harmonies. ... Do. 1 50
Vesta Vane—By L. King, R..... 1 50
Kimball's Novels—6 vols. Per Vol. 1 00
Warwick—M. T. Walworth..... 1 50
Hotspur Do. 1 50
Lulu. Do. 1 50
Stormcliff. Do. 1 50
Delaplaine. Do. 1 50
Beverly. Do. 1 50
Zahara. Do. 1 50
The Darling of an Empire..... 1 50
Clip Her Wing, or Let Her Soar 1 50
Nina's Peril—By Mrs. Miller..... 1 50
Marguerite's Journal—For Girls. 1 50
Orpheus C. Kerr—Four vols. in one 2 00
Perfect Gentleman—Lockwood... 1 25
Purple and Fine Linen—Fawcett 1 50
Pauline's Trial—L. D. Courtney.. 1 50
Tancredi—Dr. E. A. Wood..... 1 50
Measure for Measure—Stanley.. 1 50
A Marvelous Coincidence..... 50
Two Men of the World—Bates. 50
A God of Gotham—Bascom..... 50
Congressman John—MacCarthy 50
So Runs the World Away..... 50
Birds of a Feather—Sothern..... 1 50
Every Man His Own Doctor... 2 00
Professional Criminals—Byrnes 5 00
Heart Hungry. Mrs. Westmoreland 1 50
Clifford Troupe. Do. 50
Price of a Life—R. F. Sturgis.... 1 50
Marston Hall—L. Ella Byrd..... 1 50
Conquered—By a New Author.... 1 50
Tales from the Popular Operas 1 50
The Fall of Kilman Kon..... 1 50
San Miniato—Mrs. C. V. Hamilton 50
All for Her—A Tale of New York 1 50

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
00014912733